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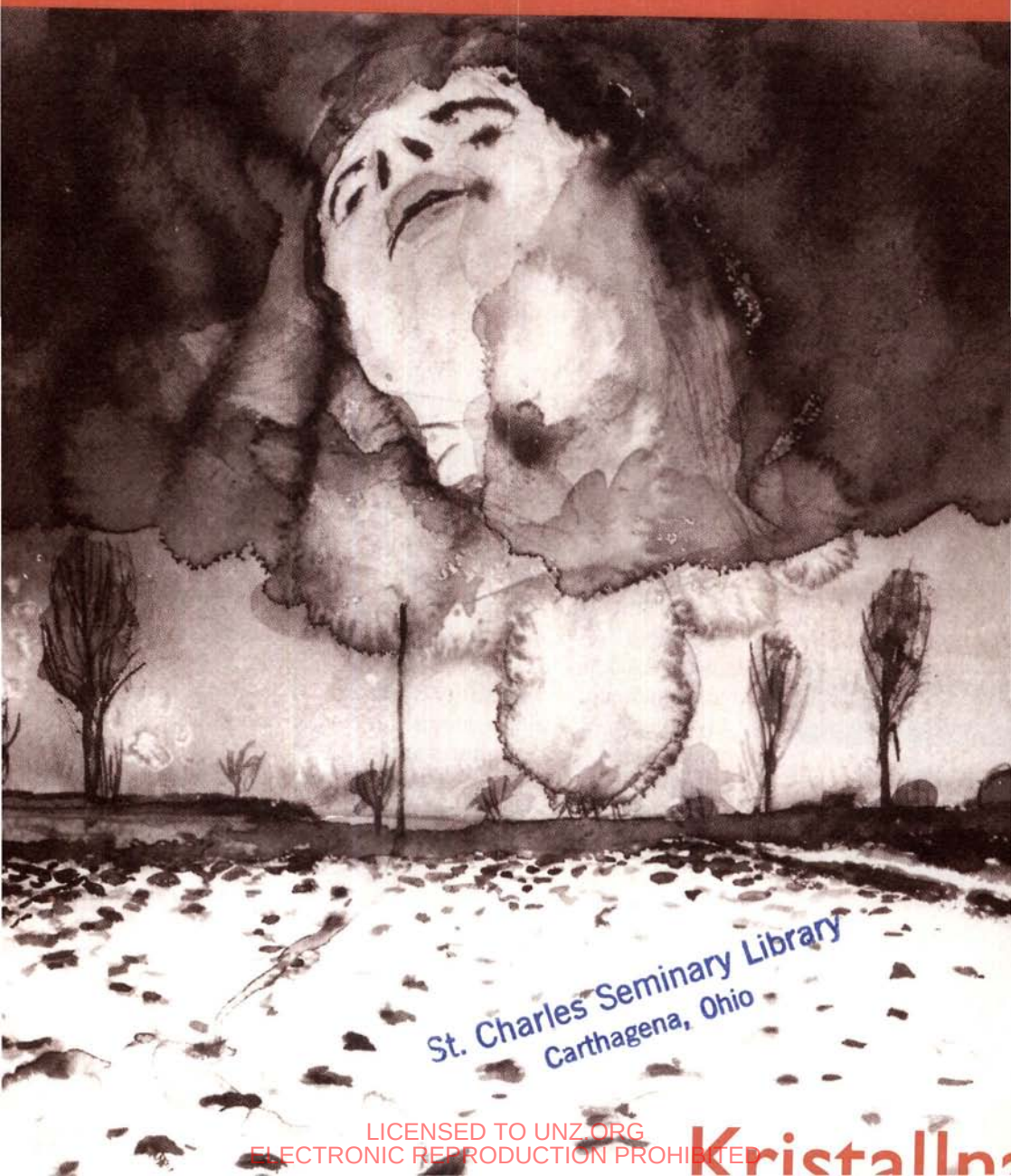
Murdoch

February

COMMONWEA



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Kristallna

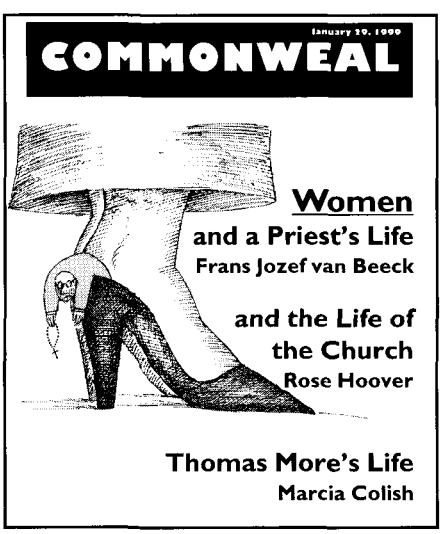
To the Editors

Fear of women

I have just finished reading the two excellent articles on women in the church in your January 29, 1999 issue. Would that the cover had reflected the tone and content of the articles, rather than subverting them! The cover illustration underscores some people's fears of women, which both Professor van Beeck and Sister Rose Hoover go a long way to decreasing. I hope and trust you will do greater justice to the content of *Commonweal* in the future.

(REV.) ELLEN K. WONDRA
Rochester, N.Y.

The writer is associate professor of theological studies at Bexley Hall Seminary and an Episcopal member of ARC-USA.



The editors reply: Perfect humor drives out fear. We'll keep trying.

Burtchaell's book

One can readily join in the lament expressed in James Burtchaell's book, *The Dying of the Light* about colleges that start off as Christian institutions and then abandon their Christianity ["Something Lost, Something Gained?" January 15, 1999]. Harvard started as a Congregational seminary, yet when I was there in the early thirties, the philosophy department had so far abandonned Christian philosophy that its history of philosophy course skipped from Artistotle to Descartes, a period of 2,000 years. I don't suppose that our Catholic universities will regress that far, but the false prophets—Heidegger, Sartre, Wittgenstein, Derrida—are now too often the measure of what's hot and what's not.

Burtchaell and your reviewer, Neil Coughlan, and any university that pretends to be Christian, are dealing with difficult questions. How to determine truth and how to establish some minimum standards by which true Christians, true Catholics, and true Catholic institutions can be determined? Can truth really be expected to bubble up, "manifest and impose itself" ["Back to the Future," same issue] without any authority to make a definite, if not infallible, judgment? More democratic procedures are certainly needed, but in the end judgments must be made. Otherwise confusion, chaos—we might as well all be Unitarians.

Catholic universities that accept no such authority, whether of popes, councils, or bishops, should have the honesty to discard all claims to being Catholic and go down the straight secular road. If Burtchaell is in fact proposing Catholic universities that accept Catholic authority, that on its face doesn't seem such a bad idea. As one looks at the American church today, the greater evidence of passion and intensity, or real seriousness, seems to be coming from the right side of the theological spectrum. Not that passion and intensity are always good news. But we all remember what the Lord said to the angel of the Church of Laodicea about the hot, the cold, and the lukewarm.

JOHN C. CORT
Nahant, Mass.

What Burtchaell missed

Neil Coughlan's review of Burtchaell's book is not only a model in setting the book and author in context, but very honest in response to Burtchaell's substantive, prickly, and combative accomplishment. I found the book fascinating. Burtchaell has all the facts and reads them in his own way—not discussing the very real fear among Catholic colleges in the '60s and '70s that they would go out of business if they did not change.

My reading of the same facts is that most Catholic schools were staring at bankruptcy without federal loans; that the decline in free labor from priests, nuns, and brothers put financial strain on the schools; that the orders that owned them were themselves facing financial troubles (the Holy Cross congregation simply couldn't afford to own Notre Dame anymore); and that the schools realized they needed to change somehow to get students and money, the twin arteries that supply lifeblood.

That they became "less Catholic" is arguable; that they issue a lot of rhetorical guff about "involving the lay community" and "engaging the secular" to cover their tracks is inarguable. But that they mostly stayed in business seems rather miraculous to me, and that they stayed Catholic at all seems to me the most interesting news of all.

I am impressed by the general honesty of the attempt to find what it is that "Catholic" means at a modern "Catholic university" even as I have to grin at the occasional utter goofiness of the effort. It was a lot easier to put a finger on Catholic identity in the college when the school was owned by an order than it is now. That is why articles about Catholic identity in the colleges are annual lowlights in their alumni magazines.

BRIAN DOYLE
Portland, Oreg.

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COMMONWEAL

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(Continued from page 2)

Faulty logic

I am appalled by the distortions of logic embedded in your January 15 editorial, "Distracted Nation." Once again a Clinton apologist dismisses his behavior with a wink and a shrug, then proceeds to lay all the nation's woes at the feet of the (evil? white? male?) Republicans.

I thought of analyzing, critiquing, and exposing your fallacious thought, but why bother? Experience has shown me that the type of clichéd and stereotypical categorizing that you display is rarely open to self-doubt or self-correction. Cancel my subscription immediately.

LEAH LEBEC
Greenwich, Conn.

The editors reply: Without that analysis of our faulty logic, we are hard pressed to offer a defense. But we reread the editorial and think we pretty much blamed everyone, including President Clinton and the American people, for dereliction of their civic responsibilities. If we seem hard on the Republicans, it is perhaps because they are, after all, in charge. When that changes, we'll be happy to blame the other guys and gals.

Washington fog

Is "petty fogging" an alternative spelling of "pettifogging" ["Distracted Nation," January 15, 1999]? I suppose you could talk about petty obscuring in contrast to real serious or solemn obscuring (fogging). But what the impeachers are doing is real serious, indeed solemn fogging—albeit while acting petty in the process. Congressman Henry Hyde's inflated rhetoric concerning Bill Clinton's testimony in the Jones lawsuit reminds me of a historian's comment about General Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur used inflated rhetoric throughout his professional career. Finally, a cause—World War II—came along to fit his rhetoric. Too bad Mr. Hyde doesn't have a cause to fit his rhetoric.

(I enjoy your magazine, hundreds of issues of which are mine by now.)

JOHN D. RYAN
Southwick, Mass.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

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C is for compunction

Sidney Callahan's recent piece on confession ended with the punchline "When penance is revitalized, the people will come" ["Forgive Me, Father," December 18, 1998]. I believe we need to change our description of this sacrament. Many of us grew up with the expression "going to confession." Most of the individual's time and energy in preparing to receive the sacrament was centered on sin.

While an important part of the sacrament, sin is not the most important. Two other parts—contrition and conversion—are of far greater importance and ought to be given more attention and emphasis. If we could approach the sacrament with consciences already examined at home, we could devote the limited time we have to a person-to-person encounter with Christ in a spirit of compunction. When we come to the moment of the actual conferring of the sacrament, it will be what it should be—a celebration of God's love and mercy! Then our expression of contrition will be more genuine and lively.

Having offered heartfelt gratitude to God for his infinite mercy, we can end our celebration with a renewed commitment to the dynamism of conversion (*metanoia* in the Scriptures). If we are hard-pressed for time, it would be better to postpone the performance of the "penance" until later, in order to make a firm resolution to that change of disposition and outlook which is the heart of the "good news." EDWARD MCCORKELL, O.C.S.O.
Berryville, Va.

Nowhere else

I read every issue of your magazine religiously. (Congrats on your website, this is my first visit.) I find that the popular media ignore moral issues. I like to read your columnists especially: They express ideas that I don't find elsewhere. DAVID GOBEL
Havertown, Pa.

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The spirit of Saint Louis

Papal visits can be a bit like a Rorschach test. Everyone sees what they want to see. John Paul II's January visit to Mexico and to Saint Louis initially seemed routine, only scaled back from his previous trips to accommodate his failing health and halting steps. In contrast, his mind and heart seemed in topnotch condition.

In Saint Louis, amid many messages, perhaps too many, the pope made a gesture that caught everyone's attention. He pleaded for mercy for a condemned killer scheduled to be executed on February 10. Governor Mel Carnahan said he was moved by the pope's appeal and shortly after the papal plane departed, he commuted the sentence of a death row prisoner, Darrell Mease, to life imprisonment. Thank goodness Mr. Carnahan is a Baptist, and not a Catholic.

Pollsters and pundits quickly pointed out that just as many of America's Catholics don't agree with the pope on abortion, they don't agree with his opposition to the death penalty either. Even so, it looked to be a teaching moment. Those Catholics, on the one hand, who are against abortion and those, on the other, who are against the death penalty had occasion once again to see the logic of the consistent ethic of life, first enunciated by the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and implicitly given a papal benediction in word and gesture in Saint Louis. In any case, for Catholic and non-Catholic alike, there was amazement at the audacity and persistence of the pope's several direct appeals for mercy and a *frisson* of elation at a sign of compassion from the governor. Ask and it shall be given to you!

At a time when American public life is ruled by a mean-spirited vindictiveness, the pope and the governor showed how simple it can be to manifest a generous heart. The nation could use a few more such gestures.

Some people, no doubt, were disappointed that the pope met with President Bill Clinton. The pope received America's number one public sinner without berating him or wagging his finger (a gesture the pope reserves for Catholics). Of course, Clinton is a piker, morally speaking, compared to Augusto Pinochet or Kurt Waldheim, both of whom the pope received when they were heads of state. Even so, it was more than a little galling for the president, who seems to have forgiven himself, to use the meeting with the pope as his own bully pulpit. But the pope didn't seem to mind at all.

During his visit, the pope said he prays for Mr. Clinton and all American leaders—a benison the nation could hardly refuse, First Amendment complications notwithstanding. Clinton ought to be near the top of that prayer list along with the crew of the U.S.S. *Impeachment* now listing to starboard in the Senate. Independent counsel Kenneth Starr, both perpetrator and victim of this vindictive spirit, may need more than a few prayers, perhaps a thirty-day novena.

But back to the Rorschach test.What we liked was the pope's imperturbability in the face of the political meltdown in Washington over the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. The pope knows, we all know, that it is not that important. Maybe in the grand scheme of things, it is not important at all. (In this case, the line between concealing an adulterous affair and obstructing justice seems inherently porous.) That's a very Catholic attitude.

There are, as we tried to point out a few editorials back ("Distracted Nation," January 15, 1999), many more important problems in the world than Bill Clinton; the

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pope talked about some of them in Mexico City and in Saint Louis. We can't say that his argument in the post-synodal statement, *Ecclesia in America*, is always compelling or necessarily full proof. (If neoliberalism has triumphed in the Southern Hemisphere, it is, in part, because the pope and his Latin American episcopal appointees have dismantled a powerful, if problematic, analytic tool—liberation theology.)

Still, the pope and a good many Catholics, north and south, know that most of these issues are more important than the partisan, puritan, and prurient interests at work in the effort to impeach the president. Mr. Clinton is an adulterer, a liar, a subverter of the law, and seemingly not all that repentant. Dare we point out that there are greater evils in the world than this? Abortion is one, capital punishment another, grinding down the lives of the poor still another. In a religion with serious moral standards, the distinctions between these and the obsession to find Mr. Clinton guilty are clear. In truth, Mr. Clinton is guilty of far worse sins (and unimpeachable offenses) than covering up adultery—he has several times refused to sign a partial-birth abortion bill, and as governor of Arkansas, he presided over the execution of a retarded man during the 1992 presidential campaign. No one in the House or Senate would dream of impeaching him for these.

The pope is right to be imperturbable. In Saint Louis he chose the better course, not to scold Mr. Clinton, but to beg for the life of a convicted murderer. If he hadn't, who would? Not President Clinton. Not House minority leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.). Not Catholics Henry Hyde or Tom Daschle, or any of those other important people in Washington.

FRANK McCONNELL, R.I.P.

It was with shock and great sadness that we learned last month of the sudden death of Frank McConnell, *Commonweal*'s long-time media critic, frequent book reviewer, and all-purpose West Coast (a place he had only ambivalent feelings about) representative. He was only fifty-seven and had recently suffered from the effects of a fall. Frank taught English literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and lived in Lompoc, some miles up the coast, a place he proudly called a backwater. But he was originally from Kentucky, migrated to the University of Notre Dame, and did his graduate work at Yale. After a stint teaching at Northwestern, he liked to think of himself as a Chicagoan. He appears to have been a popular teacher; he was certainly popular with me. Frank wore his considerable learning lightly, and like a certain kind of Irishman, he never phoned unless he had a new joke to tell, and he had a thousand. There was the one about the ten-inch man in the bar...but I won't repeat it; at least not here.

I spoke with Frank on the phone hundreds of times, but I never met him. We had tried to arrange a meeting last fall during a trip he made to New York, but our schedules just wouldn't allow it. Much to our mutual amusement, he was delivering a paper on Frank Sinatra at an "academic" conference at Hofstra University on Long Island. Among his other passions, as *Commonweal* readers know, were jazz, Shakespeare, and science fiction. He also wrote detective novels, once had his own radio program, and liked to appear on California beaches in a coat and tie. In short, a man of many enthusiasms.

Frank McConnell did some fine work for this magazine, and a playful curiosity and genuine unpretentiousness infused everything he wrote. He will be sorely missed. My world, I know, will be much duller without him. All of us at *Commonweal* extend our condolences to his wife Celeste, his children, and to the rest of Frank's family and friends.

PAUL BAUMANN

Continuing the Conversation

Explaining Bill Clinton Last year at this time, I was living in the country, in a Western state. It was an awful winter, and I was dealing with various challenges: heating the house from a big woodpile, negotiating unpaved country roads with a 4-wheel drive, having my house ransacked and robbed by someone who really knew how to drive a 4WD. And then there was my full-time job as a Life Skills teacher in a privately owned and operated medium-security prison for men. It was all quite a ride for this middle-aged cowgirl, and President Bill Clinton's troubles pretty much threw me.

Mostly, I'm a Democrat. I voted for Clinton the second time. The first time I voted for Bush, who seemed competent. But when Clinton won, I turned my allegiance to someone I found easy to like. Sure, he had made mistakes, but I believed his assurances that he had learned his lesson. Many of us '60s people still carry around a commitment to the group, to other baby boomers who came of age in those turbulent times. I liked it when Clinton looked us in the eye and so intelligently told us the nonplatitudinal truth about his marriage. I wouldn't have believed just any public servant.

Clinton ran the country while I was only wrestling with a roomful of cons. In many ways, working with prisoners is a great privilege, and I mean that sincerely. But it's not easy. As a Life Skills teacher it was my duty to cover five topics: critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, parenting, employability, and substance-abuse education. Most of the men had had these courses before. What they needed, I thought, was not more information, but rather the chance to grow in the underlying skill that turns knowledge into effective, legal, and rewarding behaviors. That underlying life skill is the ability to tell the truth.

My first epiphany as a teacher was that none of my students believed other people told the truth. In the experience of these men, telling the truth got you into a lot of trouble. They pre-

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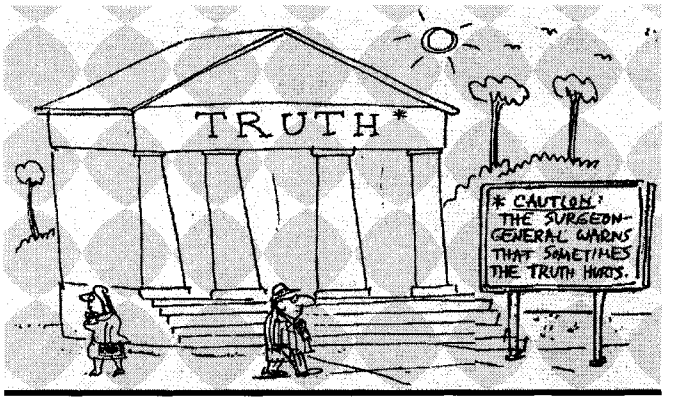
sumed I didn't tell the truth either. I assured them that I had their welfare at heart, but they told me they had every reason to believe that I was a plant for the prison authorities. They worried that if they told me something true it would get passed on to another prisoner. That could get them killed.

All of my students agreed that they knew the difference between truth and falsehood. They chose falsehood on practical grounds. Many of them sincerely felt they had no choice. We talked a lot about what people had to do to protect themselves. They kept testing me and I kept telling them the truth. Ultimately, I believe, the truth is all there is, and none of us can avoid its ramifications. Deep down I think they knew this, but they still argued vehemently for the absolute need to put off the reckoning.

When we talked about Clinton, we all pretty much agreed that he seemed to be lying. They respected him for that. And they admired him for being such a good liar. They strongly defended their faith in lies by pointing out that Clinton had respect, power, money, women, glamour—the things they wanted. They felt I was very naive in feeling so heartsick about Clinton. I should feel heartsick about them.

I eventually came to think that Clinton might have profited by being in the room with us. This conclusion was reinforced by a Hazelton Foundation video, "Criminality and Substance Abuse: Criminal Thinking Errors in Action," that I used in class. The video identifies ten errors that cons make, and it is designed to help them realize that criminal thinking leads to criminality. This linking of values, actions, and consequences disturbed many of my students. They resented the implication that they could be labeled criminals. And I had serious offenders.

Here are the ten errors cited in the video:



Acting like a victim—nothing is your fault. Seeing yourself as the good guy—avoiding responsibilities. Extreme impatience when it comes to change—can't seem to learn from the past. Closed thinking—failure to reveal what's been going on and holding back the truth. Acting like other people are our property—using people and grabbing power. Giving up when things get hard—avoiding boring tasks. Careless with responsibility—breaking promises. Acting like you're one of a kind—thinking rules don't apply to you (you won't get caught anyway). Not admitting fears—has to feel in control or feels worthless. Pity me—it's my luck that everyone is out to get me.

I do pity President Clinton. And I do see him as a con. And I hope his life plays out in such a way that he finally learns his lesson—a lesson he will ultimately be glad to learn, even though it will hurt. Hey, I'm on his side! □

Marylee Mitcham, *a licensed acupuncturist and author* (An Accidental Monk), *lives in State College, Pennsylvania.*

From the archives

Throughout 1999, Commonweal *will be celebrating its 75th anniversary. Here from the issue of February 6, 1959, is an excerpt from "The Future of* The Commonweal*" by Edward S. Skillin, long-time editor and publisher.*

It is inescapable that the American journal of opinion occupies a less prominent place on the contemporary landscape than it occupied even as recently as the 1930s. To begin with, there are not nearly as many such periodicals. And those which are still publishing have had to give ground before the onslaughts of the digests, news magazines, and picture weeklies. More than ever before it would seem that the character of the journal of opinion, rather than the numerical extent of its readership, determines whatever importance it has on the American scene.

Much of the influence of this type of magazine is therefore indirect. Among its most interested readers, those who regularly tend to weigh its views on vital issues, are public figures with large followings of their own—newspaper editors, syndicated columnists, radio commentators, professors, teachers, and others prominent in political life. This is one way in which quality of readership tends to compensate for the lack of mass circulation. Another is the great extent to which such journals are used in public and college libraries and other important centers of information, here and abroad.

All this is eminently true of *The Commonweal*....But, like other American journals of opinion, the magazine is confronted by persistent economic difficulties.

EDWARD S. SKILLIN

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SIDNEY CALLAHAN

ROCKS OF AGES

A pilgrim's progress

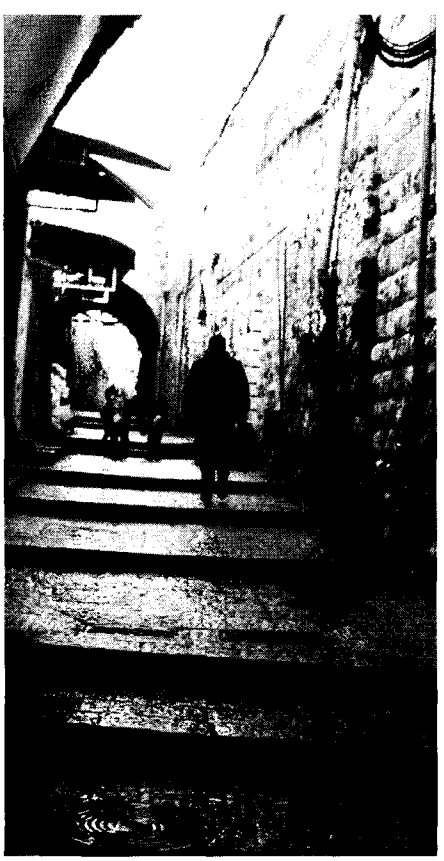
Thousands of Muslim pilgrims streamed through the narrow Jerusalem streets hurrying to worship at the Dome of the Rock. On this particular Friday in Ramadan, buses from all over Israel had brought the faithful to the third most holy shrine of Islam. Undeterred by the crowds, my friend and I pushed through the tide determined to follow the Via Dolorosa and visit the crusader church of Saint Anne.

On the opposite side of the Old City, Jews gathered at the Wailing Wall, men praying in one area, women in another. Friday evening, Orthodox Jews flowed in through the Jaffa Gate to celebrate the Sabbath, wearing ear locks, fur hats, and black suits.

Friday fell on January 1, a Marian feast day, so bells rang out from the Old City's Christian churches. A sense of celebration and tension wafted through the air. At least a hundred Israeli soldiers with machine guns were deployed on the roofs overseeing the crush of Muslim pilgrims. You cannot visit the Wailing Wall or the Dome of the Rock without going through security checks. Too many fanatics—Christians, Muslims, and Jews—have opened fire on their fellow sons of Abraham. The week we were in Jerusalem, fourteen American cult members were arrested for planning acts of violence at the millennium which, they believed, would bring on the end of the world.

Still, Christian pilgrims come. We too threaded the twisting cobbled streets of the old city and dutifully waited in line to stoop and creep into the rock tomb of Jesus in the shadowy, cavernous Holy Sepulchre Church. In Bethlehem, we inched down narrow steps into the grotto (also dark, bedizened and candlelit) where a metal star placed on a rock marks the spot of Jesus' birth. Later we traveled up through the Jordan valley to visit Capernaum, to see the rocky remains of Peter's house on the shore of the gorgeous Sea of Galilee.

What do pilgrims seek in these journeys? I'm not quite sure. A rock is a rock is a rock; whether it's the one in Jerusalem's great mosque where Mohammed ascended to heaven or one in the remaining wall of the destroyed Temple or one that rests in a Christian shrine. As a believer, I'm afraid I found the holy places to be too much like empty stage sets. Is this *la belle indifférence* perhaps a betrayal of the incarnational principle? I don't think so, because I *was* deeply impressed by the people and their faith.



In the mosques, fasting Muslims meditated and knelt in prayer, touching their heads to the carpet. Jews rocked back and forth at the Wailing Wall, reciting their prayers. Huddled together on the floor in the cramped Bethlehem crypt, Franciscan friars meditated in rapt adoration. By following a chanting group, we chanced upon a Benediction service in the Holy Sepulchre. A group of French pilgrims were completing the Way of the Cross. Kneeling on the stones and singing with the company brought tears to my eyes. Prayer and human hearts lifted up to God make the Holy Land holy.

All right, I'll also admit that walking through the stage sets can help you reimagine the words and deeds of the actors in past dramas. I bought and read two wonderful books (*With Jesus through Galilee according to the Fifth Gospel*, and *With Jesus in Jerusalem*, both, Corizan) by Bargil Pixner, a Benedictine archeologist who melds history, geography, new archeological evidence, and Scripture to describe Jesus' birth, ministry, passion, and death. Pixler loves the land and sees it as revelatory. But his gift to me was to illuminate social history. He provides a picture of Jewish life at the time of Jesus and fleshes out the social-political context of the gospel events. Pixner explains the influence of the Essene and Pharisee sects upon Jesus, and describes the Romans and pagan inhabitants.

The villages of Galilee where Jesus lived, taught, and performed his miracles come alive. Today they are gone, just as the ruins of the nearby Hellenistic cities like Sepphoris and Scythopolis lie buried. By the by, skeptics should note that new excavations and research on ancient texts often validate certain oral traditions, while discrediting others.

The traditional Way of the Cross is not accurate, but Mary may have actually lived near the Temple and the Bethsaida pools next to Saint Anne's. Pixler thinks that the Essenes influenced the Davidic clan of Mary and Jesus, and that the Essenes had centers in Bethsaida, Bethany, and Jerusalem's Mount Zion, as well at their main monastery

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at Qumrum. A rented Essene guest house on Mount Zion was probably the site of the Last Supper. Jesus' Passover meal that year followed the Essene sun calendar rather than the later date of the Temple's official calendar, following the moon. The high priests wanted to get rid of this troublemaker before the Passover feast brought volatile crowds to the city.

The arrest of Jesus, his different trials, the floggings, abuse, and final crucifixion are harrowing when given in historical detail. In Pixler's view, if Jesus had not performed miracles and risen from the dead he would be forgotten— just one more victim of oppression. His public ministry lasted three years and he never wrote a word.

But new research shows that Jesus lived in a more sophisticated milieu than we used to suppose. As a builder in Nazareth he may have worked with his family in Greek Sepphoris, spoken Greek, and perhaps even have gone to the theater there. Jesus sees *Antigone*?! He certainly would be acquainted with pagans, including the centurion of the border guards stationed in Capernaum. These soldiers were even furnished with a traditional Roman bath.

Most remarkable were Jesus' journeys by foot, four-day trips back and forth to the feasts in Jerusalem, and a trip through Tyre, Sidon, Caesarea Phillippi, and the Golan Heights. After the murder of John the Baptist, Jesus had to escape to friendly towns outside the territory of "that fox," Herod Antipas, the tetrarch.

The complex politics of the time included rebel movements, eventually leading to the great Jewish revolt in A.D. 66. The Zealots were gaining followers and Judas may have been one of them. His betrayal may have been his way, much like today's millennium cultists, of forcing Jesus to a messianic overthrow of Rome. Again we meet the perennial human faith in violence.

Still the gospel comforts. With the Resurrection of Jesus we know that embodied persons live eternally. And what points to this good news most effectively? Healthy babies and children beat out landscapes, ruins, and rocks. Everywhere in Jerusalem, Arab and Israeli madonnas walk with their beautifully dressed infants and toddlers in tow. Did we see the actual spot where Jesus reproved his disciples and took the little children into his arms? If not, no matter. In the end, love of God and love of neighbor transcend place. The pilgrimage of the heart continues always and everywhere. □

John Horgan

Irish arrangements

A prime minister & his 'companion'

Even a decade ago, if any professional soothsayer had suggested that there would come a time when an Irish Protestant newspaper would take the Irish Catholic church to task for not being conservative enough, someone would have sent for the men in white coats to lead him or her quietly away. Yet this is precisely what has come to pass, and at the center of it all lies the private life of the *taoiseach* (prime minister) of the Irish Republic, Bertie Ahern, which is currently rivaling that of Bill Clinton for headline space in Irish newspapers.

The facts are not in dispute. Mr. Ahern, who is married with two teen-age daughters, has been separated from his wife for a number of years. More recently—before his election as leader of his party and then as *taoiseach*—he established a relationship with a prominent worker in his Dublin constituency, Celia Larkin. Few people paid any attention to it: the Irish news media, despite the ever-present example of the British tabloid newspapers which have substantial circulations here, generally ignore their politicians' private lives unless they impinge in some way on their public duties. It became an issue, but only briefly, at the time of Ahern's election as leader of the Fianna Fail party, when the man he displaced, Albert Reynolds, expressed none too subtly the view that the Irish people were entitled to know where their leader slept at night. Larkin is now a paid public official in Ahern's office, looking after his constituency organization. She accompanied him on a recent official visit to China as his partner, and joined him in escorting Tony Blair on a walkabout in his Dublin constituency during the British prime minister's recent visit.

Enter, stage left, the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, and its editor for the past seventeen years, Canon Cecil Cooper. The *Gazette*, which is an independent weekly newspaper with a circulation of some 6,000 among Ireland's Episcopalians, north and south of the border, has generally been thought to reflect liberal Church of Ireland opinion. Its attitude toward the Catholic church has sometimes been mildly critical, but generally on the grounds of Catholic conservatism. The Catholic church's attitude toward mixed marriages, seen by Irish Protestants as a continuing threat to the viability of their community, has been the object of its criticism on many occasions.

The *Gazette*'s editorial was uncompromising, to say the least. Mr. Ahern, it noted, was not just an individual, but a role model: In Britain his behavior would have led to scandal and probably resignation. "It is remarkable," Canon Cooper wrote, "that the leader of the government should feel no need to make apology for this situation. It is even more remarkable that the Roman Catholic church, until recently the staunch defender of public morality in this country, has been so silent in this instance. Can one imagine that Archbishop John Charles McQuaid [archbishop of Dublin, 1940–72] would have been so reticent?" Former government minister and Church of Ireland stalwart Ivan Yates has been only one of many to express his shock and amazement at this turn of events. Publicly and privately, other members of his church

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are expressing their disavowal of Canon Cooper's stance, even as some Catholics, notably those like retired judge Rory O'Hanlon who has played a prominent part in the controversial anti-abortion politics of recent years, have rushed to endorse it. Canon Cooper maintains that his fellow Anglicans are solidly behind him, and the Church of Ireland press office says it has never received so many supportive phone calls from people identifying themselves as Catholics. In an oblique way, the controversy about Ahern has united conservative Catholic and Episcopalian voices in a manner the ecumenical movement has never been able to achieve.

Spokesmen for the Catholic church have kept a distinctly low profile. The Catholic archbishop of Armagh, Dr. Sean Brady, defended the church's right to silence on this issue by arguing both that the church never condemned individuals publicly, and that the circumstances of Ahern's relationship with Larkin were unclear. Both arguments are somewhat shaky: In particular, Ahern disclosed the nature of his relationship with Larkin publicly in 1992, and has referred to it directly on a number of other occasions since then. But it is also possible that the church's silence on this issue may be related to the fact that the absence of divorce in Ireland until the Constitution was changed in 1996 created many households—some say more than 30,000—whose unions were recognized by neither church nor state. Since the introduction of divorce legislation, the anticipated rush to the divorce courts has simply not materialized: The Catholic church, were it to join the rising chorus of disapproval about Ahern's domestic arrangements, might find itself with a larger pastoral problem on its hands than it would know how to solve. □

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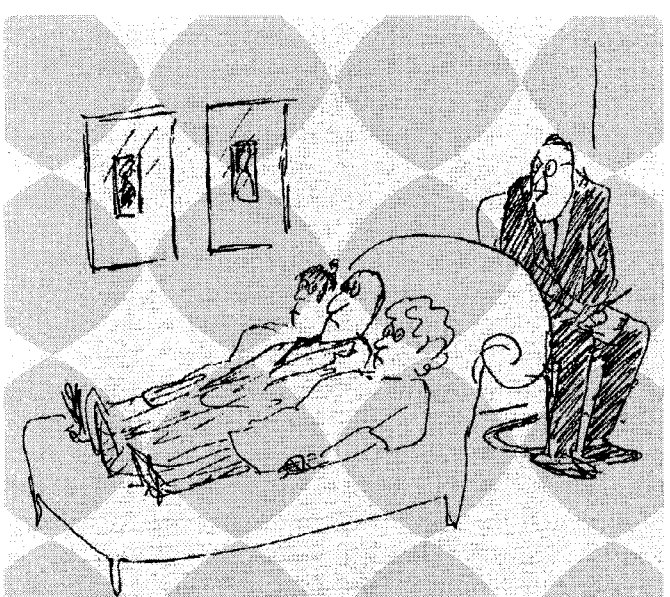

"Well, we do have a mess on our hands, don't we?"

Joseph A. Komonchak

Convening Vatican II

John XXIII calls for a council

We grow old, we grow old.... It is now forty years since January 25, 1959, when Pope John XXIII announced his intention of convoking an ecumenical council. Those old enough to remember the event may be startled to be reminded how long ago that was. They should have the experience of teaching a course on Vatican II to undergraduates. When I gave an assignment asking students to interview older members of their families about the church before and after the council, several told me they would have to interview their grandparents—their parents are too young to remember Catholic life before the council! Sigh.

Pope John had not yet been pope for a hundred days when he made the announcement that began it all. Already he had made an impression, and, there being nothing deader than a dead pope, he was being compared favorably to his predecessor, Pius XII, with whom he seemed to differ in mind and style as much as he did in body and shape. He had been elected, so it was said, to preside over a period of transition from the long and active pontificate of Pius XII to that of John's successor. He was nearly seventy-seven years old when elected, could be expected not to live very long (as he did not—less than five years), and would be useful principally to restore some bureaucratic order in the Roman curia, much neglected in the declining years of the Pacelli reign. The new pope agreed that things did need shaping up. But his vision extended rather farther and deeper, and he looked elsewhere for a response.

His speech at Saint Paul's Outside the Walls was intended to describe what would distinguish and characterize his pontificate. Significantly, he began with his role as bishop of Rome, giving a strong indication that he intended to take it seriously and not to regard it as a necessary but somewhat peripheral responsibility of his office. Then he extended his gaze out to his universal role as pope. He saw a world which was at once alive with spiritual movements of great promise and threatened by contemporary manifestations of the conflict between Augustine's two cities, particularly the spread of a materialism that was distracting people from the things of the spirit.

John XXIII was an amateur historian who had worked on Saint Charles Borromeo's implementation of the Council of Trent. It was natural, then, for him, instead of being content with bureaucratic tinkering, to recall ancient and rather neglected forms for the renewal and reform of the church. Trembling with emotion, he said, but quite resolutely, he was proposing a diocesan synod to deal with the new challenges facing Rome and an ecumenical council for the needs of the

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universal church, to be followed by an updating of the code of canon law. Toward the end of his speech, given to a small group of cardinals after a ceremony closing the Chair of Unity Octave (as it was then known), he spoke of "a renewed invitation to the faithful of the separated churches to share with us in this banquet of grace and fraternity."

Although Pope John spoke of the idea of a council as an unexpected divine inspiration, there is evidence that he had conversed about the need for a council long before he became pope, that it was an object of discussion among the cardinals at the conclave that elected him, and that he had spoken of it with several people in the few months that followed. Some of the cardinals who listened to him at Saint Paul's knew that the idea was being considered. The pope later remarked that the immediate reaction of his audience was silence, which, with a mixture of edifying piety and irony, he was willing to attribute to a surprised joy too intense for words.

That same day, the *Osservatore Romano* released a short and comparatively unenthusiastic press release about the pope's announcements. But it never printed the text of the pope's remarks, which did not become known until they were printed in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* six weeks later, with the ecumenical reference in the speech rather muted. Apart from reprinting the Vatican newspaper's notice, the semi-official Vatican biweekly, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, did not mention the council for a full three months. One could be forgiven for thinking that some people in Rome were not happy about the pope's initiative.

The text of the pope's speech, along with a request for comments and advice, was sent to the cardinals who had not attended the ceremony. Their reactions were mixed. The first words of Cardinal Montini of Milan upon hearing the news were, "What a hornet's nest!" Cardinal Lercaro of Bologna thought the decision "rash and impulsive," the result of the pope's "inexperience and lack of culture." Cardinal Spellman of New York told a French diplomat that it was "premature, senseless, and doomed in advance to certain failure." "Such meetings," this close collaborator of Pius XII said, "are only conceivable after a very long preparation and prior consultation not only of the curial cardinals but also of all the princes of the church throughout the world." Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo, on the other hand, was joyful at the news, recalled that he had himself suggested the idea to Pius XII twenty years earlier, and looked forward to an event that could be as important as the Council of Trent. Two-thirds of the cardinals, both in the curia and throughout the world, sent no response at all.

It appears that Ruffini, along with Cardinal Ottaviani, who had headed a commission appointed by Pius XII to draw up an agenda for a possible council, were among those who had spoken of the possibility of a council during the conclave. Their enthusiasm for the idea, in such contrast to the initial disbelief of men like Montini and Lercaro, who would soon reverse themselves and eventually become active and effective leaders of the council, already anticipates the drama of the council. In the thirty-five months between the announcement and the opening of the council, in the struggle over the purpose and character of Vatican II, the views of Ruffini and Ottaviani would prevail: The council should restate and confirm the antimodern attitudes and strategies of the modern papacy. It would only be in his opening speech at the first session of Vatican II that John XXIII, who had been curiously passive so far, would side with the critics of the preparation, among them Montini, Lercaro, Suenens of Malines, and Léger of Montreal, and orient the council away from the catastrophism of "the prophets of doom" and toward a positive pastoral engagement with the challenges of the day. By the end of that session, in something like a *coup d'église*, those who had presided over the preparation were marginalized and those who had then been marginalized would emerge as conciliar leaders. And Pope John XXIII became known as the pope of a transition quite different from the one expected of him. □

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Confederate Statue at Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard

"What's that rebel doing here?" you asked
with patriotic scorn. As if I cared
about a statue peering at the sea.
But there he stood, cap angled to deflect
the sun, on a plinth in a northern state
no single Gray had seen throughout the war.
Paint peeling on his rifle stock, smart dress
uniform bombed and blotched by Union gulls,
he looked across the sea to Europe, not
to Richmond. Nothing seemed to fit until
we walked around behind and read the brief
inscription: "The chasm is closed," it said.
"Dedicated by Union veterans
...in honor of Confederate soldiers."
You shook your curls in disbelief. "Imagine
Grant preening on a pedestal in Georgia
or Custer honored at a Reservation."
Breaking waves rolled across the sand. The dunes
rose up against a swirling wind. "The past
is a corroding monument," I said.
"Only victors have magnanimity."

Phillip Corwin

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'KRISTALLNACHT' REMEMBERED

History & communal responsibility

Amitai Etzioni

I am bound by history, duty, and by my personal journey to face again a very well-known subject. As with the stories of Passover, slavery and the ten plagues, and the liberation that followed forty years of purification in the desert—repeated and restudied every year in the Jewish tradition—so must we all acknowledge, remember, and learn from the past. Whether it is *Kristallnacht* (November 9), Auschwitz Liberation Day (January 27), or a specific time to reflect on slavery (February in the United States), we must use ritualized occasions to focus our shared memories and to draw lessons from them about collective guilt and how to deal with it.

By the scales of what was to follow, *Kristallnacht* (November 9, 1938) was a rather limited affair. Jewish store windows were broken and many shops were looted. Numerous synagogues were set on fire. Some 30,000 Jews were arrested, at least 91 were killed on the spot, and others were sent to already functioning but newly expanding concentration camps at Buchenwald, Dachau, and Sachsenhausen.

Kristallnacht was a nationwide organized act, in which orchestrated terror was unleashed and clearly focused on one scapegoat, the Jews, who were blamed for all of Germany's problems. It was an expression of anti-Semitism as an organized political force, raised to a new level of mass hatred and hysteria. As it met little opposition, domestic or from the outside, *Kristallnacht* set the stage for the much more tragic, degrading horror of the Holocaust that would stain Germany, and through it, civilization forever: the murder of 6 million Jews, 200,000 gypsies, 70,000 handicapped and mental patients, 10,000 homosexuals, as well as political dissidents and other German critics of the regime. *All were God's children; we weep for them all.*

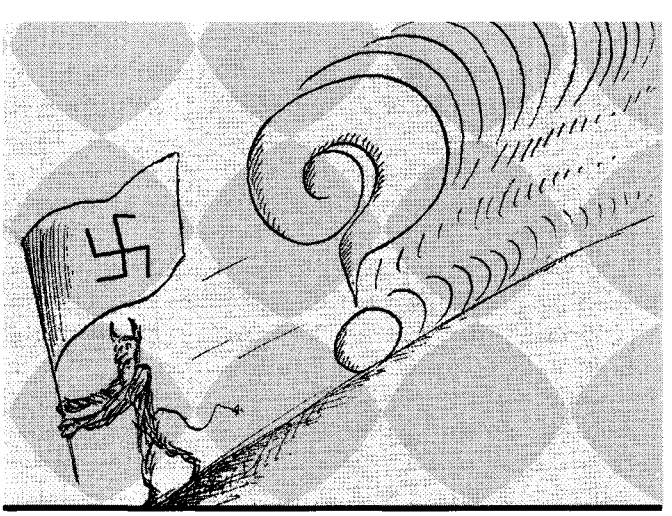
Beyond merely killing millions of innocent civilians—solely because of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, or political beliefs—gruesome atrocities were committed that make one wonder if there is a God in heaven, if there could be any deeper depths of human depravity. The mind cannot comprehend the Holocaust. The soul cannot grasp what happened. But *Kristallnacht* was an important threshold.

When preparing these reflections, I felt particularly inadequate—unable to convey the depth of feeling, loss, hurt, and anger evoked in me by the events I have just described in statistical terms and pale adjectives—to communicate the "feel" of these shattering events.

I was born the same year as Anne Frank, 1929, in Köln, Germany. I had a solid German name: Werner Falk (I later changed it to a Hebrew name, my current one). My first childhood memory is of being taken by my grandparents for a stroll in a forest near Frankfurt. It was 1935. We came upon a forest fire and watched from some distance. Suddenly two trucks full of Hitler Youth came to help fight the fire. My grandparents grew frantic and we ran away in terror. I understood little about what was going on, but their fear stayed with me for years to come.

My family was luckier than most. We escaped to Palestine the same year. There my father, who had been a successful executive in Germany, found himself on a rocky hill, trying to farm. Over the next twenty-one years he struggled to get a foothold in a strange climate and land, but he never quite succeeded. Desperate, he finally returned to Germany, only to die shortly thereafter. Clearly, I did better than most: I had a father, albeit one who was disoriented. And he did better than many: He saw his son grow up.

My grandma (on my mother's side) lived with us in our home in Palestine. She lost her mind and opened her veins when she learned about members of the family who per-



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ished in the concentration camps: two sisters, their husbands and children. From my father's side of the family, all the aunts and cousins, including twins who were deaf and mute. Altogether, twenty-five members of my extended family died in the concentration camps. There are no graves on which to lay flowers, to say *kaddish*, to bring closure to one's grief. Still, my parents were spared. As I said, I was one of the luckiest of them all.

Now it is two generations later. Some people in Germany say it is time to close the books, to stop dwelling on the past. "We were too young to be guilty, but we certainly paid the bill. We had to rebuild a destroyed country and suffer being stigmatized; the accounts are squared and closed..." is the way Josef Joffe characterizes it (*New York Review of Books*, November 28, 1996). In contrast, Ruth Elias, Holocaust survivor and author of *Triumph of Hope: From Theresienstadt and Auschwitz to Israel* (John Wiley and Sons), feels that the Holocaust is a stain that all Germans are condemned forever to seek to remove but never to succeed.

Between these two extreme positions lie many more nuanced ones. One widely shared view is that one cannot walk away from the past. Those who do are doomed to repeat it. As Hannah Arendt observed, "insofar as it is even possible to overcome the past, this can only be done by recounting what has occurred." We cannot understand Germany's present foreign relations, several key laws—such as those that ban certain forms of speech and political organization—or much else without a frank examination of the past.

As I see it, while the story of the Holocaust and the preceding events and after-effects must be retold, its meaning must be carved out by each generation. The Germany of today is profoundly different, not only from that of 1938, but also from 1948 and 1968. The question we face, *two* generations after *Kristallnacht*, is what is the proper response of this generation, of this age, to the Holocaust? I speak not of the relatively small number of Germans today who were adults sixty years ago, whether they were involved themselves, or simply knew about the events and did nothing to stop them, or chose not to know. I speak of their children, and *their* children, a rapidly growing proportion of the German people. Can one, in justice, blame them, hold them accountable for what happened?

One of the first to address this question of guilt was Karl Jaspers, whose book *Die Schuldfrage* is still a touchstone for numerous examinations of the issue. Writing immediately after the war, he distinguished among various kinds of guilt. One is *criminal* guilt, that of the perpetrators, so judged by the courts; it does not apply to those who were not yet born or who were children at the time. No one should hold the child of a convicted felon criminally responsible.

Another is *political* guilt, "the deeds of statesmen and of the citizenry of the state," Jaspers writes, that result "in my having to bear the consequences of the deeds of the state whose power governs me and under whose order I live. Everybody is co-responsible for the way he is governed." This sense—of political guilt—comes about because, as Jaspers states, "politically everyone acts in the modern state, at least by voting, or failing to vote, in elections." As the scholar Jean-François Lyotard has noted, "the notion of an apolitical individual no longer makes sense." I will later return to the question of whether ordinary citizens might have been able to act against the Nazis, but in any case, this type of political guilt does not hold for the present generation either. Whether or not their parents or grandparents should or could have voted differently, taken to the streets to demonstrate, or even laid their bodies before the tanks—as was done later in Tiananmen Square, the Philippines, and around the Russian Parliament—this has no bearing on most Germans today. They were not present, and hence could not have been politically involved.

A third form of guilt for Jaspers is *moral* guilt. "I who cannot act otherwise than as an individual," remarked Jaspers, "am morally responsible for all my deeds, including the execution of political and military orders. It is never simply true that 'orders are orders.' Rather...every deed remains subject to moral judgment. Jurisdiction rests with my conscience...." This form of guilt, as the other two, applies only to those directly involved in the events before 1945. None appertains to later generations. In this sense, what Jaspers called the process of "purification," *Reinigung*, has been completed. It is time to move on.

Whatever conclusions one reaches concerning historical guilt, one must not confuse—as is too often done—*collective guilt* with *hereditary guilt*. I owe the distinction to Jeffrey Olick of Columbia University. "Collective guilt," when it applies, extends to all members of the involved generation. But even such guilt does not justify imputing "hereditary guilt" to unborn, future generations, particularly ones reared and active in a later, profoundly restructured society. I see no reason to accept the notion, for example, that there is something in German genes, history, or culture that will prevent Germany from continuing to be a reconstructed, democratic nation that fully respects human rights. Nor do I agree with those who argue that Germany must be melted into Europe if one is to avoid a future Holocaust.

And yet, the lid refuses to be closed, the door to be shut. Many German colleagues and friends—and I myself—have a strong moral intuition that there is still *something* that must be treated, wounds that still need to be dressed and issues addressed. On examination, these concerns are best met by what I call the communitarian concept of communal responsibility.

Communal responsibility is based on the fact that each of us is born into a community and shares its history, memories, identity, achievements, and failures. We are not simply individual human beings who can retreat behind a Rawlsian "veil of ignorance," secure in our universal rights and historical innocence. We are also members of specific families

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and communities. We cannot help but share their burdens, just as we share their treasures, their responsibilities as well as their privileges. Thus, an American inherits both the proud memory of the Boston Tea Party and the agony of slavery, the marvelous work of the Framers of the Constitution and the slaughter of Native Americans, the vigilant protection of freedom—from Greece to Korea—and the murder of innocent civilians in My Lai. The memory of slavery is particularly telling. Abolished some 134 years ago, before the ancestors of most contemporary Americans had even immigrated, slavery is still part of the American past: We cannot erase or ignore it. Most important, our aggrieved past commands us all to act, not merely the sons and daughters of plantation owners. We are all coresponsible for that which our community has perpetrated and condoned, for both past sins of commission and omission.

In the same sense, just being a German means being part of both a great culture that gave the world Goethe, Kant, Bach, Schiller, Heine—and the Nazis. I am not saying that the brighter moments of our histories all shine to the same extent, nor that the darker ones are equally troubling. But I am pointing out that we are all members of a community, and as such, bearers of its burdens. Like others, I prefer the notion of responsibility to that of guilt, particularly when it concerns people who personally could not have been involved in the crimes committed. I do not hold that guilt is always harmful or inappropriate or a poor source of motivation for positive social and moral deeds. But it can generate negative feelings, and sometimes debilitating consequences. I know a fair number of younger Germans who are *obsessed* with Germany's past, who rather than drawing lessons from it, wallow in its wrongs. They turn morose and depressed, and are forever defensive and apologetic about their country. Unfortunately, like digging into an old wound, their pain does not lead them to make affirmative commitments. In contrast, the concept of communal responsibility calls attention to the fact that whether one is guilty or not in a personal sense, one has a responsibility to build on the particular past of one's community, drawing on its assets and learning from its liabilities.

A good person cannot ever be completely private. A major lesson of* Kristallnacht *is that a good person must also be an active citizen. I have an obligation to follow public events and to act on them within my capacity.

What, then, does communal responsibility entail? What specific obligations does it impose?

- First, it cautions not to look for easy scapegoats. While not denying or diminishing their importance, one can never blame select power elites ("the Nazis did it, not the Germans"), objective conditions ("it happened because of runaway inflation, massive unemployment"), or even third parties ("Hitler was caused by the humiliating armistice imposed on Germany at the end of World War I") for the dark moments in one's communal past. I am not suggesting that external forces and objective conditions did not and do not play a role in a nation's history; but they do not exempt one from sharing the responsibility for one's community and its course of action.
- Second, remember the past. Each generation of parents is obligated to recount the formative events of the past to its children. In the United States, we still mourn the circumstances, savagery, and massive bloodshed of the Civil War. Without drawing any parallels, it is a credit to Germany that as a community—albeit not every single German—it has learned to do the same concerning the history of the Nazi era.
- Third, being completely private is not a virtue. While the first two communal responsibilities cited have often been articulated, the next one is less frequently stated: a good person cannot ever be completely private. A major lesson of *Kristallnacht* is that a good person must also be an active citizen. I have an obligation to follow public events and to act on them within my capacity. Given the limits of each individual, I have an obligation to search for and find like-minded people with whom to join in expressing my concerns: to vote, to organize, if need be to demonstrate peacefully, and even to engage in nonviolent civil disobedience. When skinheads terrorize immigrants, when there is genocide in Rwanda, or ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, when innocent civilians are slaughtered in Chechnya—it is our "business."
- Fourth, act early. The lesson of history, especially of *Kristallnacht*, is that one must act before a regime of terror takes root. When I discuss the Holocaust with my German colleagues, some say that 1938 was already much too late. Others say that 1933 was too late, as tens of thousands of Communists, Social Democrats, and other critics of the regime had already been arrested or disappeared. But, they argue, 1932 was too early; people could not possibly have foreseen what was to follow, although the fact that Hindenburg was assured that Hitler "could be controlled" suggests that some key people understood there was a problem (after all, this was years after Hitler had written *Mein Kampf*, and his thugs were already roaming the streets).

I cannot determine exactly when it was the right time to first act. But a lesson of the Holocaust is that it is never too early. Like the broken window theory in fighting crime—which suggests that ignoring smaller crimes invites larger ones—once a community looks away it signals that it will tolerate more serious, larger-scale organized crime. It defines deviance down, to use Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's phrase. In contrast, if one speaks up, organizes to protest the desecration of even one grave, the first swastika on a synagogue, or the bombing of a refugee home, one

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demonstrates that the community will not tolerate such evils.

The need for such protestations holds true not only domestically but internationally. We have known for years, for example, that the Serbs would carry their ethnic cleansing to Kosovo. Whatever one thinks about the Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army, we should have had international observers, peacekeeping forces, and mediators on the ground long before the first shots were fired. And there is strong evidence that we could have stopped or limited the genocide in Rwanda, in which up to a million people were killed, by speaking up and acting early.

- Fifth, build civic societies. A major element in developing and sustaining democracy is the creation of a civic culture in fledgling democracies, including the former Soviet republics and numerous third-world countries. I draw an example from the society I know best, the United States. In the early 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy arose. He was a demagogue who spouted hatred and conspiracy theories, scaring many people into acquiescence, hounding others out of jobs and elected office, even driving some to suicide. But when he passed an invisible line, long before he became a serious threat to the stability of American democracy, he ran up against strong civic opposition. Major media figures, especially Edward R. Murrow, took him on and activated public concern. Joseph Welch, a lawyer, turned on him during televised Senate hearings, addressing the badgering McCarthy: "Have you no sense of decency, Sir?" This gesture resonated widely with the sense of fair play already deeply instilled in American civic culture. Once public opposition to McCarthy was aroused, politicians joined it, further mobilizing opposition, and McCarthy was deflated.

While Britain developed its civic society over a considerable period of centuries, Germany has shown that, drawing on some preexisting foundations, a strong civic society can be built within one generation. In the post-Soviet era, when numerous states are looking to the West to help them develop such a civic society, Germany can serve as an example of how a nation can change its civic culture with dispatch. In particular, Germany can teach the world about "working through the past" (*Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*), a kind of civic education that has become an integral part of German schooling. Thus in recent years, when fire bombs were thrown into refugee homes, foreigners harassed, or skinheads marched, large numbers of Germans responded quickly and vigorously in public.

- Sixth, share the goods with others. Countries like Canada, with its frequent contributions to international peacekeeping forces, the United States in its mediation of conflicts in Ireland and elsewhere, and Norway in its diplomatic and economic efforts, have all shown that a given nation, by its involvement, can draw much pride from making the world community better. The purpose of such acts is not to make up for some parts of a particular nation's past, but to give expression to the fact that not to do evil is simply not good enough. Germany has made numerous efforts to share its wealth with the third world by underwriting and staffing development programs abroad. But it should also, in keeping with the terrible lessons learned from its own history, do better than settle for "normal politics." Germany can do more than simply support a strong euro, lead the European bank, or point to its own economic miracle. Rather, Germany should be a major force in creating and financing an international corps of volunteers, perhaps a genocide-prevention corps, that could be sent anywhere in the world at the first sign of the mass killing of innocent civilians. It would be a Gandhi-like force, trained in nonviolent techniques, but backed by an armed UN peacekeeping force. Through such efforts at preventing further genocides, memories of Germany's own bitter past could be gradually overcome, although its memories of the Holocaust will never, and should never, be erased.

Some scholars have argued that the Holocaust was the ultimate expression of our unwillingness to accept differences among people. German President Richard von Weizsaecker has warned: "Do not let yourself be driven to enmity and hatred against other people, against Russians or Americans, against Jews or Turks... against black or white.... Learn to live with each other, not against each other." We may be different in appearance, in manners, even in culture and particular bonds and obligations, but beneath them all, we are equal human beings: members of one ultimate community, the human race. This is our past. It is also the promise of our future. □

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Richard Alleva

LOVE'S LABOR

'Hilary & Jackie' & 'Shakespeare in Love'

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Whenever Robert Frost, reciting "The Road Not Taken" to packed houses, came to those concluding lines, he would raise his arms in victory like a heavyweight boxer who had just scored a knockout. Never mind that the poem doesn't really say that one road is better than the other. Delivery and gesture made the poem what the octogenarian, belaureled old man now wanted it to mean: He had chosen the hard, lonely path of poetry and had achieved ultimate vindication.

But let us imagine that language had abandoned Frost one-third of the way down the road, that whenever he reached for the *mot juste*, it failed to be there. What then? Would he have regretted the other, more-traveled-by road, the road of more chicken farming, more school teaching, and (perhaps) a rather happier family life than Frost was ever to know? Or would he have concluded that such longings were in vain and that the road he had taken was the only one possible because that road was inside him?

These questions are brought to mind by the new British film, *Hilary and Jackie*, which deals with the lives of the great cellist Jacqueline Du Pre, who took the public path of musical celebrity, and her sister Hilary, a gifted flutist who chose domesticity and private contentment. This movie, written by Frank Boyce and directed by Anand Tucker from Hilary's memoir, *A Genius in the Family*, is a happy paradox: Though charting the turning points in the sisters' lives with lucidity, it begins and ends in mystery. It is not an exposé but an evocation of two existences that we can never quite understand.

Mystery is broached in the very first scene. Frolicking on a beach, the little sisters are startled by a spectral, female figure. Jackie runs to her and the stranger imparts something we can't hear. When the child repeats the statement in her sister's ear, Hilary is taken aback, almost appalled. "Why did she say that?" But Jackie reassures her that everything will be O.K.

Both are musical prodigies but Hilary, the elder, seems more disciplined and determined. When Jackie complains at being excluded from performing at one of Hilary's concerts, it isn't out of envy but simply because she can't stand being excluded from any of her sibling's activities. Their mother scolds, "If you want to be together, you have to be as good as each other." Jackie does start to get better and, startlingly soon, outstrips her sister. Mystery: Can artistic talent be catalyzed by the need to preserve a sisterly bond?

This immediately leads to another mystery: Can artistic talent, and the lifestyle flowing from it, fray the very bond that nurtured it? For, just as Jacqueline begins her traveling career, Hilary, abashed by the very nature of large-scale public performance, retreats (or ascends) into a happy marriage with Kiffer, an ex-conductor, and a crofter's country existence.

It is Jackie who immediately senses the hurt of the separation to come, and it makes her furious. When Hilary claims that Kiffer's devotion makes her feel special, Jackie bluntly tells her she's not. End of argument, but only for the time being.

Now the film skips several years, and we see Hilary, happy as wife and mother, being startled by the sudden appearance of her now famous sister. Distraught and emotionally voracious, the visitor insinuates herself not only into the home but (with her sister's anguished consent) into Kiffer's reluctant embrace. Has Jacqueline become that by-now-familiar figure, the artist-as-vampire? Having triumphed publicly, must she now displace, even obliterate, her sister domestically? When Kiffer and the marriage show signs of buckling, Hilary shows Jackie the door and Jackie bitterly departs.

Now we backtrack to the beginning of the cellist's career and see that since the rootless life of a virtuoso cuts her off from her family (and, most grievously, from her sister), Jackie has begun to hate her own talent. But then she is able to use her art (together with her good looks and irrepressible sexiness) to attract the renowned pianist, Daniel Barenboim. Their marriage is happy and her art flourishes.

But when Jacqueline contracts M.S., the disease not only dooms her artistry but brings into question her very identity. She mentally reconstructs the bit-

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ter exchange with her sister before Hilary's marriage. Again we hear Jackie say, "Well, you're not special." But, instead of Hilary's actual, mild reply, we now hear a retort that Jackie has imagined and inserted into her sister's mouth: "If you think it's easy to be ordinary, you're wrong. If you didn't have that cello...." This self-torturing fabrication is Jackie's way of wondering, "What will be left of me once my art has vanished?" Nothing, she fears, so she tries to regain what she had before she was an artist: a nest from which she can never be ejected. Barenboim wants to give her this, but she rejects him because he is part of that musical world that is now, in her illness, abandoning her. And so she descends upon her sister's farm to seduce, to nest, to take the road more traveled by, to do what simply cannot be done: the rearrangement of the past.

The remainder of the film provides a brief, exquisitely painful account of Jackie's final physical deterioration and a purely natural miracle of earthly love. No, Jackie cannot retreat to her childhood but Hilary brings the old love forward into the present and, with Barenboim, mitigates as much of the horror of a truly terrible death as she can. Love cannot extinguish this anguish but it lets the sufferer know that pain does not rule the universe unchallenged.

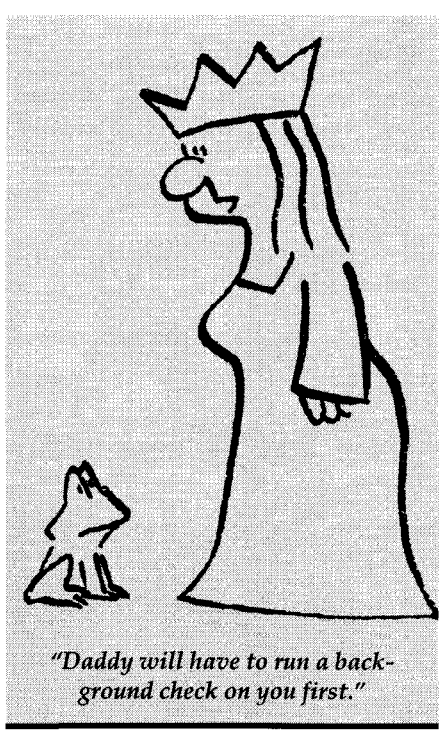
When the events in Boyce's script are clear and self-explanatory—the advent of Jackie's celebrity, the courtship of Hilary and Kiffer, the physical onslaught of M.S.—Anand Tucker's direction is swift and lucid, and the cinematic shorthand of montage is well used to march the chronicle ahead (the repeated "no" of a prim flute teacher tells you all you need to know about Hilary's disillusionment with musical academia). But where the story is mysterious, Tucker's camera stands still to wonder at moments that verge on the hallucinogenic: Hilary shrinking from an audience's applause to cower in an auditorium's boiler room; Jackie's beautiful cello creaking and moaning inside a dank hotel room while its owner broods on her lonely existence—what is warping, the instrument's wood or the musician's psyche?

The unfairness of life, one of the subjects of this movie, has seeped into the critical reception of the lead performances. Rachel Griffiths as Hilary is just as good as Emily Watson as Jackie. But Griffiths, playing a self-effacing woman, works with small, swift strokes—glances, pauses, half-suppressed winces—while Watson is properly flamboyant and her baby-faced beauty becomes, by turns, piquant, gloating, vicious, radiant. Griffiths is a valuable artist, but Watson is—or soon will be—a star.

By the way, at the movie's conclusion, we learn who that woman on the beach was and what she said to Jackie. But, like everything else in this movie, the answer solves one mystery only to suggest a hundred more.

The good-natured, deliberately naive joke at the heart of *Shakespeare in Love* is that there is no mystery whatsoever to artistic creation. Life provides the coffee beans of poetry and imagination grinds them into stories and verse. And what sparks imagination? Love, of course. You got a problem with that?

So there's this young hotshot Will Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes *con brio*) who's gonna hit the big time if he can only get his act (or acts, all five of them) together. No problem. Once he falls for Viola de Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow, anemic in skirts but an absolute knockout in Elizabethan boy-player drag), he has only to listen to himself make love to her and—bingo!—there's the dialogue for his new hit play, *Romeo and Ethel*...well, maybe the title needs work.



"Daddy will have to run a background check on you first."

This set-up, though propped up by a romantic intrigue (Viola's trapped in an arranged betrothal) and pretty good anachronistic jokes (the local apothecary is also a psychiatrist with fifty minutes of sand running through the hourglass), wouldn't be enough for a two-hour comedy except that the filmmakers have pulled off two coups.

First, the scriptwriters Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman provide a modernization of Elizabethan language sleek enough to speed the action along but also "period" enough for the several excerpts from *Romeo* not to seem too archaic by contrast.

Second, the director John Madden ably places his story amidst the bustle and squalor of Elizabethan London. The jokes sometimes pall but, when they do, just shift your eyes to the edges of the screen where a multitude of ministories are taking place among merchants, aristocrats, thieves, and beggars in a London that isn't so much a metropolis as a village on steroids.

Clever though he is with the background, Madden may foment too much commotion in the foreground: too many people running in and out with messages, the actors delivering practically all their lines at the same breathless clip, no shot held longer than a few seconds, and the action billowing along on the waves of Stephen Warbeck's constantly swelling but not particularly distinguished score. Madden was obviously trying to convey the passion of young lovers and artists in an England of crescent greatness, but parts of his movie are keyed up to the point of hysteria.

Nevertheless, much of *Shakespeare* scintillates. And any movie which features beefy, gravel-voiced, wonderful Jim Carter as Juliet's nurse, and makes you understand how such a dray horse of a guy could be both funny and moving in the role, deserves...nay, demands your patronage. □

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Patrick Jordan

OUT OF THE ASHES

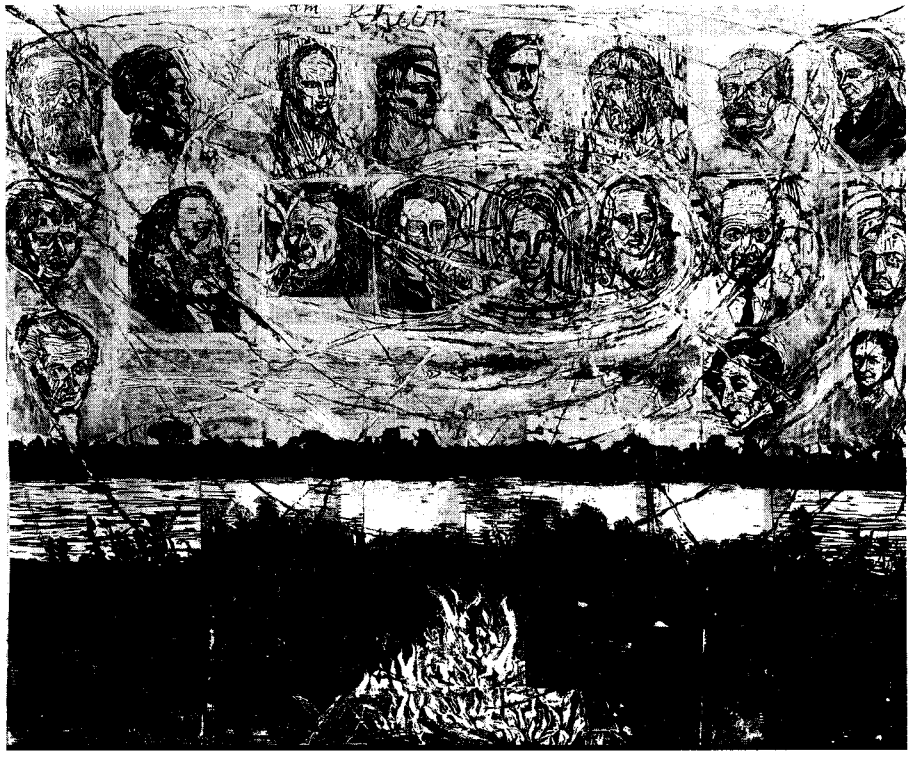
The postwar art of Anselm Kiefer

It does not take long for "Anselm Kiefer: Works on Paper, 1969–93"—fifty-four watercolors, gouaches, woodcuts, acrylics, and photomontages on exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art until March 21—to rattle and disturb you. It is as if the German artist (born 1945) has set out to wrestle with all your perspectives and preconceptions: intellectual, aesthetic, and moral.

First there is the bracing Nordic coldness of many of the representations; then the brashness of artistic manner, at times suggesting a lack of finesse if not flakiness; and finally an insistent intellectualism that cries out for explication. One doesn't ordinarily anticipate finding the name Ludwig Feuerbach scrawled across an otherwise scenic and well-executed watercolor ("German Lineage of Salvation," 1975). Here, as elsewhere in the exhibit, curator Nan Rosenthal's explanatory notes are invaluable, for Kiefer seems intent on taking you deep into the Teutonic forest. He dwells not only on Germanic mythologies, art, and philosophy, but on National Socialism, the Holocaust, and nuclear Armageddon.

Kiefer was born in Baden-Wurtemburg, on the upper Rhine, the son of an art teacher. While at university, he studied law and French but, after a retreat at the Dominican priory at La Tourette, decided to pursue art. He is best known for his large, layered, abstract yet representational canvases of ruins, forests, and fields, one of which, the majestic oil piece "Bohemia Lies by the Sea" (1996), is adjacent to the entrance of this exhibit. The horizon figures prominently in many of his works. In 1992 he moved to southern France, where he maintains a studio in Barjac.

This collection consists of the Met's impressive holdings of Kiefer's works on paper and a huge woodblock arrangement attributed to Albrecht Dürer, on loan for the occasion from Washington's National Gallery of Art, that helps place Kiefer in perspective. Kiefer is at home in a wide variety of mediums, and here displays them individually (as in a number of lucent watercolors) or combines them, using photographs, acrylic, molten lead, even straw or debris to convey a sense of both limits crossed and materiality. Scholar Mark Taylor has remarked that despite Kiefer's penchant for interfacing genres and uncommon elements, his works are not incoherent, "although they may not form readily integrated pieces" (*Disfiguring*, University of Chicago Press). According to Taylor, by utilizing a variety of artistic elements, philosophical themes, and symbolic metaphors—in the Met exhibit, serpents are prominent, as are wood, fire, Nazi architecture and paraphernalia, even the artist's palette—Kiefer forces the viewer to contemplate the complex, harrowing events of the century.



Perhaps there is no more apparent example in this exhibit than the fine "Winter Landscape," 1970 (*see* cover), a seventeen-by-fourteen-inch watercolor, gouache, and pencil work. A woman's head, thrown back and bleeding profusely from the neck, floats out of a descending cloud and drips blood onto a pocked, snowy field. It is a powerful visual image, evoking Nelly Sachs's poem, *O die Schornsteine*:

O the chimneys
On the ingeniously devised
habitations of death
When Israel's body drifted as
smoke
Through the air.

The *Shoah* is never far from Kiefer's mind. As he commented in 1990: "We see railroad tracks anywhere and think about Auschwitz. It will remain that way in the long run." According to the critic and novelist Francine Prose, Kiefer's artistic project involves nothing less than redeeming his country by making the viewer look hard at images that evoke Germany's past and present.

Kiefer's 1985 work, "Heavy Cloud," utilizes the same horizontal perspective, but this time the hovering cloud has been formed literally out of molten lead. Su-

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perimposed on a photograph of a descending ridgeline, this "heavy-water" cloud leaks a stream of yellow radiation onto the landscape below. Heavy water, of course, is an element in the nuclear process, and at the time of the work's composition, nuclear safety and NATO's plan to extend medium-range missiles on German soil were hotly contested issues. Never adverse to irony, Kiefer employs lead—an element used to store nuclear materials—to depict a rather porous container. There are even patches in the lead cloud where acid has eaten through, exposing the back of the piece. Taylor comments that Kiefer's art is "rending," that such rifts are left uncovered to startle the viewer into realizing just how disfigured and disjointed are our times. Kiefer himself has said: "I tell stories in my pictures...to show what's behind the story. I make a hole and go through."

Kiefer deploys irony elsewhere when he uses Nazi symbols to deprecate them. "Untitled (Heroic Symbols)," 1969, is a watercolor self-portrait. The artist raises a *Sieg Heil* salute in a bleak landscape, but all the grandiosity of Hitler's "thousand-year Reich" is made impotent in his limp-wristed hand.

In "On the Rhine" (1987), a huge, roughly hewn, twelve-by-fourteen-foot composite woodcut and acrylic, there is another cloud of sorts, a chorus of witnesses hovering above the horizon formed by the Rhine. The river flows serenely, left to right; on its near side is a burning pyre. Perhaps it signifies the destruction let loose by German history. The cloud is composed of nineteen woodblock portraits, fused to form a pantheon of German literary, philosophic, and military personages. They include Saint Ludmila, Alfred Krupp, Clausewitz, Nazi storm trooper Horst Wessel, Heidegger, and the composer Carl Maria von Weber. A decidedly mixed crowd. In using the art of the woodcut, Kiefer indicates his respect for German high culture and tradition, but pokes a finger at its false impulses and catastrophic deeds.

The final piece in the exhibit, "Untitled" (1996), is another large (twelve-feet-by-eight) composite woodcut that uses acrylic and shellac on paper and canvas. In stark black and white, it depicts the sleeping artist on the floor of a field of gigantic black sunflowers. A shaft of the mammoth flowers seems to rise out of his lower body, swaying totem-like over his frame. Light seems to emanate from the darkness here. Bits of shellac, splattered high up on the screen à la Pollock, send fleeting glints of light onto the forest floor, rejuvenating life. Despite the century's terrors, we are not undone.

Anselm Kiefer's work is neither seamless nor reassuring. Precisely for those reasons, one cannot turn from it unchallenged or unmoved. As befits the work of a powerful first-generation postwar German artist, it combines elements of self-reproach, agonizing memory, and the need to engage them while moving on. □

Patrick Jordan *is* Commonweal*'s managing editor.*

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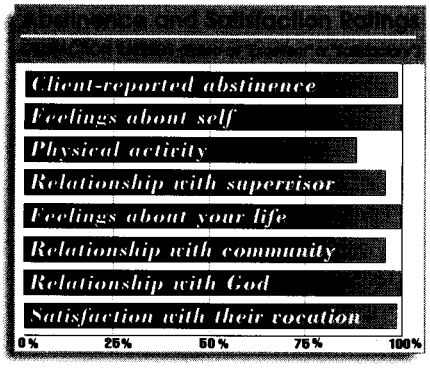

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Trophy marriage

Elegy for Iris
John Bayley
St. Martin's Press, $22.95, 275 pp.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

From the mid-forties through 1994, Iris Murdoch wrote more than two dozen novels, at least three important philosophical works, plus literary criticism, poetry, reviews, and essays. A trained classicist who taught philosophy at Oxford, she spent much of her working life creating fictions that examined the intricacies of human relationships with the eye of the moral philosopher—not through strident judgment but through loving observation and attention. The past tense is appropriate, though an obituary is not yet in order. Murdoch has lost her memory and with it the power she once possessed to write masterly fictions and lucid philosophical works. A woman with the intellectual and creative energy to generate such an outpouring, she now writes nothing. She remembers nothing but the most simple phrase, and that for no more than a moment. She suffers from Alzheimer's disease.

As poignant as her condition is, *Elegy for Iris* tells a story even more touching than the loss of her prodigous creative powers. Iris Murdoch is also John Bayley's wife. More than a story of her—or of him—more than the story of her novels or his own literary works, or of her disease and his steadfastness in caring for her, this memoir is Bayley's story of his forty-year marriage to Murdoch.

Whatever the nineteenth-century source for Tolstoy's sentence opening *Anna Karenina*, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," it can no longer be true. Today, unhappy marriages all look very much alike. It is happy families and happy marriages that strike us as singular achievements—and often distinctively so.

What is distinctive about the Bayley-Murdoch ménage? It has none of the trappings of what might pass these day for a happy or successful marriage, though it appears to be that. Nor is there a sense of cozy domesticity cosseting their retirement (housekeeping and household accoutrements and comforts were not their strong suit, as Bayley amply illustrates). Neither do they seem to have gathered a salon of intellectuals and literary types à la Bloomsbury full of gossip and affairs. And though a life without children, it is nonetheless a family life.

As a graduate student at Oxford, Bayley looked out his window one day to see a "lady on the bicycle...and wondered who she was and whether I would ever meet her. Perhaps I fell in love." Bayley casts himself as the suitor in a tale of courtly love: she elusive and private; he persistent and, in ardent pursuit, a bit jealous. Perhaps he is being gallant when he suggests that Murdoch may have married him out of compassion. In 1956 when they finally married, it seems to have been a brief event at the local registry office.

Still, what strikes the reader is how well suited they are. Is this how their marriage started out? Or did it, by fits and starts, angry words and explanations, accommodate to their mutual need for quiet and concentration? For what they have shared, until Murdoch began in 1994 to succumb to the fog of Alzheimer's, was a life of solitude given to reading, thinking, and writing. On their honeymoon in Italy, as they sipped coffee in the square of Volterra, Bayley finally realized, "We were together because we were comforted and reassured

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by the solitariness each saw and was aware of in the other." For him, it is "one of the truest pleasures of marriage....Also the most reassuring."

Two Oxford dons, two writers, perhaps there is no great surprise that Bayley and Murdoch seem so compatible. Common interests of an intellectual and literary kind, a shared sense of humor and decorum of the British kind, all of these go a long way in smoothing over the irritations of the everyday and the inevitable difficulties of the writing life. And then neither had great expectations. "We expected neither sex nor marriage to get anywhere: We were happy for them to jog on just as they were." Was it a marriage of convenience then? Not very.

Of course, Bayley is not writing of his complaints, and his tribute to Murdoch is not likely to raise the inconveniences of a marriage in which no one ever cleaned the house, or seems to have cared much for cooking. He puts it neatly: "One of the pleasures of living with Iris was her serenely benevolent unawareness of one's daily welfare. So restful." Taking that to be an honest and not an ironic sentiment, I conclude that Murdoch did not suffer a common female complaint, the need to take care of people, nor did Bayley suffer the complementary male complaint, the need to be taken care of. So restful.

Bayley was determined, he writes, that "she not be distracted from [working]." So there was no housekeeping. Not much cooking. No gardening. He wrote in bed; she wrote steadily at her desk. They ate lunch reading their books and listening to an inane BBC soap opera, "The Archers." And no throwing things out either, as confirmed by Sarah Lyall, in a recent *New York Times* profile (December 30, 1998), that pronounced their home "shockingly untidy."

It is the ordinary tasks of everyday life that are often the crucible of marriage. But apparently not this one. Bayley's instinct for tidiness, suggested in the course of the book, may have been almost extinguished by this marriage of true minds. That makes his one confession of rage at Murdoch all the more touching. As she has slipped into a state of forgetfulness and certain forms of obsessive behavior characteristic of Alzheimer's, she persistently waters the house plants that seem to be Bayley's one island of domestic pride and cultivation. He describes shamefacedly how he screamed one day "finding her with a jug in her hand, and the windowsill and the floor below it slopping over with stagnant water....I went suddenly berserk....The rage was instant and total, seeming to come out of nowhere." This anger, he judges, "seems now to be a way of still refusing to admit that there is anything wrong." But of course everything is wrong. Is this the woman he married?

"Iris is...the most genuinely modest person I have ever met....The normal anxieties and preoccupations of a successful writer about status and the future...were completely absent with her. Now that she has forgotten all about it anyway, I am struck by the almost eerie resemblance between the amnesia of the present and tranquil indifference of the past." She is, as he observes in loving detail, the same person, the woman he married, but existing in a different realm, as she said to a friend in a moment of stark lucidity, "sailing into the darkness," but content, as he reports, to sit and watch the inane British TV program "Teletubbies."

Nonetheless, Bayley writes, echoing an earlier observation, "purposefully, persistently, involuntarily, our marriage is now getting somewhere. It is giving us no choice—and I am glad of that." Iris "is not sailing into the dark: The voyage is over, and under the dark escort of Alzheimer's, she has arrived somewhere. So have I."

That is at least part of the story told in this volume. No doubt much has been left out and a good deal transformed for the purpose of telling a coherent story—and told from Bayley's perspective. Should we be suspicious? For good reason, we have all come to realize that memoirs are often better read as a form of fiction than a representation of reality. I am not sure that Murdoch or Bayley would find the distinction useful, or the implied criticism that he has exposed her to ridicule by describing her illness. Indeed, *Elegy for Iris* can be read as the story of a good life and a loving marriage that Murdoch helped to create. Bayley is as immersed in that world as she, as shaped by it as she. Does he violate that world as husband and narrator? I don't think so.

In her luminescent philosophical essay, *The Sovereignty of Good*, Murdoch examines the role of the will in moral agency, "The ideal situation...is ...to be represented as a kind of 'necessity.' This is something of which saints speak and which any artist will readily understand. The idea of a patient, loving regard, directed upon a person, a thing, a situation, presents the will not as unimpeded movement but as something very much more like 'obedience.'" Bayley has been "obedient." And in a turn of the plot familiar to Murdoch readers, we might conclude that she has produced her best novel yet, both as co-author and subject. □

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels *is editor of* Commonweal.

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BIG IDEAS TRAVEL

Atlantic Crossings
Social Politics in a Progressive Age
Daniel T. Rodgers
Harvard University Press. $35, 672 pp.

John T. McGreevy

Thirty years ago, historian Peter Filene proposed that his colleagues quietly bury the term "progressivism." All scholars agreed that the first two decades of the twentieth century had witnessed a burst of governmental and civic reform, but disputes over just who was a progressive (W.E.B. DuBois? Jane Addams? Theodore Roosevelt? Louis Brandeis? John Dewey?) and what beliefs, if any, they shared had become embarrassingly fussy. Dissertations insistently claiming this or that sect of Wisconsin politicians or Washington policymakers as the true progressives had become the American equivalent of medieval treatises on the corporeality of angels.

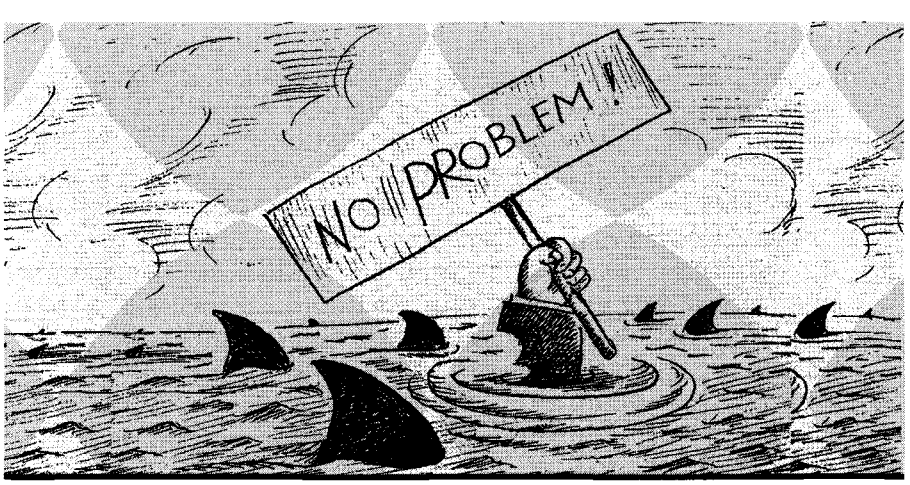
That Daniel Rodgers sidesteps this entire discussion is one among many advantages of his impressive new history of social politics during the period. Rodgers's title, *Atlantic Crossings*, suggests his purpose, which is to argue that reform efforts in the United States were part of a broader and connected attempt in France, Germany, Denmark, and Britain to respond to the intertwined dilemmas of explosive urban growth, growing poverty, and mass migration.

This assertion might seem unremarkable, but Rodgers demonstrates more clearly than any previous historian how literally hundreds of American activists pounced upon the pilot projects and settlement houses of the suddenly innovative Old World and attempted to transplant them to native grounds. The depth of research, in three languages, conclusively establishes this shared response to what contemporaries called the "social question." Part of Rodgers's purpose is to chide American historians whose narratives rarely venture outside the analytical cage of the nation-state. "For a moment," he argues "London's East End and New York City's Lower East Side; the 'black country' of Pittsburgh, Essen, and Birmingham; and university debates and chancery discussions in Paris, Washington, London, and Berlin formed a world of common referents." Jane Addams modeled Chicago's Hull House on similar efforts in London's East End, economist Albert Shaw described for American audiences the virtues of Glasgow's municipally owned streetcar lines, and Lewis Mumford urged Americans to visit modernist public housing projects in Frankfurt.

All true, but Rodgers also claims that the international dimensions of the problem (poverty, urban housing, rural blight) and the transnational links between reformers prove that American and European social politics were part of a common arc. The evidence is ambiguous on this point, even for those historians properly worried that arguments for American exceptionalism substitute patriotism for analysis. After all, the social welfare states that develop in France, Germany, and Britain—from mass worker housing to elaborate social insurance programs—are far more impressive than comparable developments in the United States. World War I solidifies social welfare expansion in Western Europe, but in the United States it solidifies the presidential ambitions of Warren Harding. Where Europeans exported carefully drafted pieces of reform legislation in the 1920s, Americans exported Model Ts, dime stores, efficiency kitchens, and tractors.

Even the crisis of the Depression did not fundamentally alter this picture. Rodgers deftly sketches how the economic crisis created an ideological opening for progressives to try their most cherished schemes—from voluntary guidelines for wages and prices to town planning efforts and publicly owned utilities. But Rodgers does not disagree with recent assessments that these efforts produced relatively few enduring programs. Instead, American liberals by the late 1930s had begun focusing less on policy reform than on increasing economic growth and individual consumption, and Rodgers demonstrates quite clearly that European models had little effect on American politics in the immediate postwar era. The triumph of a Republican party on the warpath against "big government" in the 1946 elections is a stark contrast to the simultaneous ascendancy of the British Labour party and its ambitious social welfare agenda.

Rodgers is a superb historian, and like all historians he is predisposed to emphasize the contingency of the recent past, the constellation of forces that prevented a more social welfare-oriented American politics at one moment, the obtuseness of particular reformers or



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their opponents in the next. But another reading of the evidence would support the sort of broad generalization that makes Rodgers uneasy: that most Americans during the twentieth century persistently emphasized the virtues of the competitive market, even when this sort of rhetoric had almost disappeared on the European continent; and that the emphasis in American culture on individual autonomy gave advocates of a more social vision little maneuvering room. The problems faced by reformers in Boston and Berlin were similar, but the cultural resources in Massachusetts and Prussia were quite different.

Support for this assertion might come from the trajectory of Catholic social thought, one important international tradition of social reform neglected in *Atlantic Crossings*. Leo XIII, after all, and the Italian Jesuits who helped draft *Rerum novarum* were among Europe's most influential voices on the "social question," and Catholic intellectuals and workers formed the backbone of what eventually came to be called Christian Democracy, a movement central to the formation of the modern European and South American welfare states. Catholic social thought had more influence on the American welfare state than Rodgers allows—John Ryan, the nuns who founded the world's largest network of Catholic hospitals, Al Smith, and even Father Coughlin might have figured in his story. But Rodgers is also correct, in a more important sense, not to emphasize Catholic social thought, since its formal idiom of corporatism, subsidiarity, and guilds always rang slightly off-key in a culture that invented credit cards, installment payments, and mobile homes.

Perhaps too scrupulously, Rodgers only hints at the contemporary implications of his project. But it is hard to read his homage to this earlier, cosmopolitan group of activists without a tinge of regret at the narrow way in which contemporary social policy debates on matters such as welfare and health policy are framed. Members of the Clinton administration, as Rodgers points out, never even bothered to make the public argument that Americans could learn how to organize health policy from foreign models.

Perhaps they decided not to waste their breath. The extraordinary changes in global capitalism over even the past ten years, however, may prompt both a reformulated "social question" and an appreciation for the importance of Rodgers's work. The Asian crisis suggests the vulnerability of any single nation in an era of international financial markets, even as international organizations now mount efforts to prevent a regional economic collapse. A renewed sense that the most effective markets require both openness and vigorous constraints—a view persuasively developed by the early twentieth century reformers Rodgers so rightly admires—might usefully direct discussion on these most important matters. □

John T. McGreevy *teaches history at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of* Parish Boundaries *(University of Chicago Press).*

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WARRING VALUES

Work and Welfare
Robert M. Solow
Edited by Amy Gutmann
Princeton University Press, $19.95, 100 pp.

Charles R. Morris

From 1960 to 1970, New York City's welfare caseload more than quadrupled, from about 50,000 cases to 220,000 cases. Spending went up even faster because grant levels were also increasing rapidly. The 1960–70 growth spurt also signaled a new disconnect between welfare and the real economy, for it came at a time when New York was enjoying unusually strong economic growth. Between 1965 and 1970, the city added almost two hundred thousand new jobs, and by 1968, New York City's unemployment rate, at only 3.1 percent, was the second lowest big-city rate in the country after Dallas.

Clearly, as Joseph Heller might have put it, "something happened." Whatever it was, about five years later it happened everywhere else in the country too. Welfare caseload growth in the United States between 1965 and 1975 almost exactly matched the 1960–70 growth spurt in New York.

What most people understand by "welfare" is the program formerly called "Aid to Families of Dependent Children," which the tougher rhetoric of welfare-reform legislation has redubbed "Temporary Assistance to Needy Families." Surely, no other federal program generates more megawatts of controversy per dollar expended. The president's fiscal year 1999 budget projects $16.5 billion for welfare grants (states will roughly double that figure), or less than 10 percent of the total allocation for "income security," which includes unemployment compensation, food stamps, and the like, and only a miniscule fraction of the vast outlays for Social Security and medical assistance programs. Last year, the Congress forced the military to spend more than $16.5 billion on weapons the generals insisted that they didn't even want.

Robert Solow is a Nobel-laureate economist, with a long interest in welfare issues, and his slim little volume is an elegant attempt to discover why the program is so controversial, and to explore the policy implications of his conclusions. The book comprises two lectures given at Princeton University in the 1996–97 academic year, plus commentary by economists Glenn C. Loury and John Roemer, and by Gertrude Himmelfarb, the social historian, and Anthony Lewis, the political columnist.

Solow locates the welfare controversy at the nexus of two important social values, self-reliance and altruism. The traditional American ethos limits the proper objects of altruism to those who cannot be expected to be self-reliant. The original New Deal family-welfare legislation was inspired by the plight of "widows and orphans," victims of circumstances outside of their control—in short, the deserving poor.

"To hell with him. I've had it up to here with lousy crumbs from the rich man's table!"

The extraordinary 1960–75 welfare growth spurt came after social work professionals, lawyers, and other advocates expressly challenged the assumption that welfare eligibility should be linked to individual deserts. Welfare became an "entitlement," a form of "new property" in some formulations. The old system of caseworker supervision, with individually tailored grants and regular home visits, which in practice was often intrusive and racially discriminatory, was replaced by an impersonal grant-dispensing machinery which, in the early years at least, had almost no controls at all.

It is absurd, as some conservatives tend to do, to blame the demoralization of the inner cities on the easier availability of welfare. But liberals tend to fall into the opposite trap. In his commentary, Glenn Loury eloquently documents the behavioral pathology in some slum neighborhoods—the lack of stable attachments to marriage, school, or work, especially among young fatherless males—but insists that it has nothing to do with welfare, which seems equally absurd. Unmarried teen-age girls don't have babies to maximize welfare benefits, as a Charles Murray might argue, but it's hard to believe that the easy availability of welfare didn't make *some* contribution to making single mothers and fatherless children the norm in many neighborhoods.

Solow's solution, which he offered before the recent welfare-reform legislation was passed, might be termed "Clinton-plus"—to relieve the strains on the American store of altruism by requiring self-reliance on the part of the poor to the greatest extent decently possible. He would accomplish this by conditioning welfare benefits on the obligation to work or train for work. Solow is a director of the Manpower Development and Research Corporation (MDRC), the premier research organization dealing with welfare and work issues, and he supports his argument with extensive research data suggesting that the great majority of welfare recipients really do prefer work to welfare. Indeed, it has almost always been the case that most welfare recipients work; but the jobs are too

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unstable, irregular, or poorly paying to keep them off the rolls.

(Anthony Lewis is astonished at the revelation that most welfare recipients work. It is more astonishing that someone who has written on welfare issues as long as Lewis has didn't know that.)

The crux of Solow's argument, however, and the critical difference between his proposals and the recent "reform" legislation championed by the Republican Congress and neoconservative Democrats is his insistence that many, perhaps the vast majority, of welfare recipients *will never be self-supporting, and may never be able to find jobs in the current economy*. He makes the case for workfare in direct opposition to market fundamentalists who insist, in effect, that if the poor are forced to shift for themselves, they will.

MDRC has amassed impressive research on this question. For whatever reason, poor people tend to have very limited skills. Training, counseling, and other supports help some, but only a little. High-tech America does not place a high value on low-skilled people. When the time limits on the newly "reformed" welfare program start to run out in a couple of years, large numbers of people, deserving and undeserving alike, are going to be in very serious trouble.

The only way to protect both American traditions of altruism and self-reliance, Solow argues, is to ensure that jobs are available for all welfare recipients who must work. He makes no attempt to work out the mechanics of a program, but it is clear that it must be some combination of earned-income tax credits, cash grants, and supplemental medical and other assistance, training, and, above all, large-scale creation of subsidized public or private jobs for the less skilled. That will be very expensive, but there is a great deal at stake—not just a decent sufficiency for the least able poor, or the preservation of cherished American values, but something like our national integrity. □

Charles R. Morris *was the administrator of the New York City and Washington State welfare programs in the 1970s. He is the author of* American Catholic *(Times Books).*

AN ARID LAND

Lasso the Wind
Away to the New West
Timothy Egan
Alfred A. Knopf, $25, 266 pp.

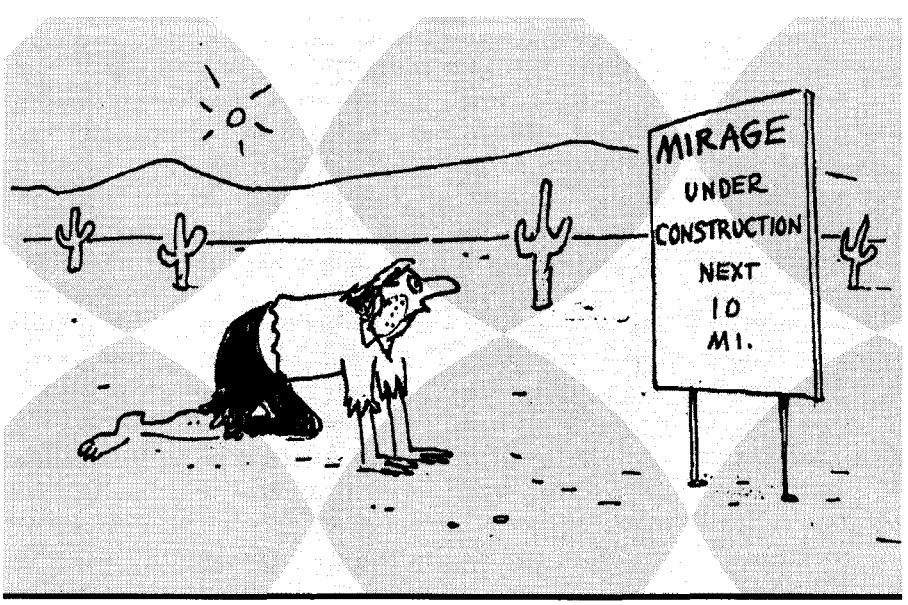
Marking the Sparrow's Fall
Wallace Stegner's American West
Wallace Stegner
edited and with a preface by Page Stegner
Henry Holt, $25, 359 pp.

Chris Anderson

In *Lasso the Wind*, Timothy Egan chronicles his journey through the "New West" of hot tubs and espresso bars. What's discouraging, though, is how little has really changed since the '40s and '50s when the late Wallace Stegner began writing the essays that his son Page has collected in *Marking the Sparrow's Fall*. For generations, the story of the West has been the story of exploitation and extraction.

Egan sees some signs of hope in his tour of eleven Western states. Wolves are howling again in Yellowstone, the Nez Perce have been welcomed back to the Wallowas. But occasional ecological victories pale beside a Las Vegas or a Phoenix growing out of control on the desert floor. Even the vast public lands of the West are now overgrazed and overcut. What Egan calls the "narrative" of the West hasn't been changed but fulfilled. If the reactionaries have withdrawn to the woods, if there are more computer chips than cow chips in the West, if 86 percent of Westerners now live in cities, it's because the habits of the past have played themselves out. The mines are mined, the forests felled, and the only people who can afford to live on a ranch are stand-up comedians and Hollywood directors. Whether by cattle or by soccer moms, the land has been steadily consumed ever since we got here.

Stegner announced the problem years ago in his wonderfully dignified prose. What defines the West is "the test of aridity," a test that we are always failing. "People are everywhere and in trouble wherever they are," he wrote, largely because huge numbers of us insist on living in a desert that can only sustain a few, sucking up all the available water and then rerouting it from elsewhere



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until everything is out of balance. "There are too many of us," Stegner bluntly says. "We will either starve or strangle in our own wastes." And then still more bluntly: "conservation means survival."

What's threatened finally for Stegner isn't merely our economic survival—although for him this is a fact so obvious that he can only despair about the thickheadedness of the many people who choose to ignore it. What's threatened, too, is our spiritual survival, as he first put it in 1960 in his eloquent "Wilderness Letter," reprinted in *Marking the Sparrow's Fall* and reason enough to celebrate this sometimes uneven miscellany of pieces. "Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed." The landscape shaped our character, and as that landscape disappears our inner lives become increasingly barren and narrow.

Egan's prose in *Lasso* is occasionally as glitzy as some of the places he describes, especially when read against the measured cadences of Stegner, but the point he makes is depressingly the same. Traveling, as he says, with a fly rod and running shoes, he encounters everything from the "Wacko West" of the UFO hunters and the survivalists to the literary West of the celebrities and the nature writers to the "bloated urban monster" of Las Vegas, our representative melanoma. Although Egan's tone of this is more like Tom Wolfe than Wallace Stegner, Stegner is the grandfatherly presence behind these very postmodern essays, the figure that Egan alludes to more often than any other.

And ultimately, too, for Egan as for Stegner, the struggle is even more spiritual than economic. "If land and religion are what people most often kill each other over," Egan says, "then the West is different only in that the land is the religion. As such, the basic struggle is between the West of possibility and the West of possession." Egan's spiritual longing is perhaps clearest in his evocative essay on Acomoa, an ancient Anazsazi city of masoned stone high on a plateau in New Mexico. His forced comparison between the Palace of Popes in Avignon, France, and this "city in the sky," this "Place That Always Was," betrays the superficial theology of many contemporary writers. The tendency is to fall back on unconsidered stereotypes about Christianity and sentimental oversimplifications of Native American religion. But the longing is real—for a landscape of renewal, a landscape where we can contact whatever is beyond us. Underneath the slickness, Egan is just as rhapsodic as Wordsworth and Thoreau, although he has no more illusions than Stegner about the effect that writers might have on public consciousness.

The crazies are holed up in their mountain shacks, watching old John Wayne movies on their gas-powered VCRs. We yuppies are bumper-to-bumper on the freeways, Jeep Grand Cherokees as far as the eye can see, Garth Brooks sounding on every private stereo. And outside, all around us, the world continues to bleed. □

Chris Anderson *is professor of English at Oregon State University and author of several books, including* Edge Effects: Notes from an Oregon Forest *(Iowa, 1993). He is also a Catholic deacon.*

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THE VOUCHER CANARD

Peter Feuerherd

Last November, the Supreme Court let stand a Wisconsin school voucher program that allowed students to pay for private school tuition with public monies. The seemingly never-ending battle over the future of education appeared to have taken another turn.

Just a few weeks before the Court's action—or more accurately, inaction, since the justices simply decided to let an existing program continue—I attended a parent-teachers night at an urban high school that enrolls the kind of students often argued about in the voucher education debate.

Instead of the horror stories one hears about such places, this particular school is an obvious success story. Interested parents waited on long lines to speak to polite and helpful teachers. The scene was a picture of parental and professional concern about education.

This is despite the fact that the school is located in the heart of an urban area with a reputation for toughness and occasional crime. It has an overwhelmingly minority student body—82 percent—a factor often cited as an excuse by leaders of failing schools.

But this school is, by all objective standards, an overwhelming success. Ninety-eight percent of graduates go to college; there is a 95-percent daily attendance rate; and the combined average SAT score is 1,144, a figure that would make better-financed suburban schools proud. I would bet that even the intelligent readers of this journal, if they care to remember back that far, would probably average less than that SAT score.

Given the nature of this magazine, the punch line of this anecdote would tend to point toward one direction: that this is a Catholic school. But it's not. The school is Brooklyn Technical High School, a New York City public institution, operated by the same Board of Education often cited as a moribund, bungling bureaucracy in countless newspaper and television news reports which have become staples of New York City journalism. So what's the secret of this success story? The answer is both simple and complex.

One, the school offers a challenging curriculum, including basic requirements in mathematics and science. By graduation, students have to pass biology, chemistry and physics, foreign language, four years of English, and social studies, among other requirements.

But the other factor may be even more important. The student body at Brooklyn Tech is equipped to handle a challenging curriculum. Although a public school, Brooklyn Tech is selective; only those who score near the top of a city-wide entrance examination taken by eighth graders gain admission. The entrance exam is an annual New York City ritual. Tens of thousands of students line up for blocks around Stuyvesant High School in lower Manhattan in the cold to compete in the entrance examination for the city's three high schools which require it for admission. Those schools—Brooklyn Tech and the even more selective Stuyvesant and Bronx Science—have stellar academic reputations.

It is quite a scene. Vans from Korean churches and other immigrant community groups from throughout the city drop off their youthful passengers, who have completed tutoring programs to prep for the exam. It is no adolescent lark. The tension on the faces of the eighth graders is palpable. The students know the exam is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to escape from the clutches of neighborhood public high schools with meager reputations. Ultimately, the success of those three high schools is largely the result of the selectivity of the admission process. The same, it needs to be said, is true for the success of many Catholic high schools.

This recognition comes from someone who has gladly sent his children at various times to Catholic schools in appreciation for the moral and religious truths promulgated there. Still, I'm more than a bit uneasy about the kind of gloating that takes place about the problems of public schools in some Catholic education circles and in those sectors which trumpet vouchers as the cure-all for what ails education. Selectivity—whether that be by formal exam, the extended effort which tuition costs put on parents, or even the inclination to sign a child up for a voucher program—is a large part of what makes successful Catholic and public high schools.

I'm not saying this is evil or untoward. It is, in fact, quite natural. No responsible parents would do otherwise for their children. I'm glad that the Supreme Court is willing to let the Wisconsin voucher program continue. But the big issue in education is really about what to do with those children who don't pass selective exams or have parents with the inclination or ability to pay tuition. It's those children who are the most at risk of failure. It's hard to gauge if voucher programs will ever reach them in the numbers necessary to make a real impact on this country's education crisis.

Despite the privatization mania, public schools are here to stay. The question is whether they will become backwaters for the forgotten or places where all parents can be proud to send their children. □

Peter Feuerherd *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

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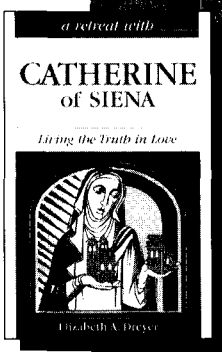

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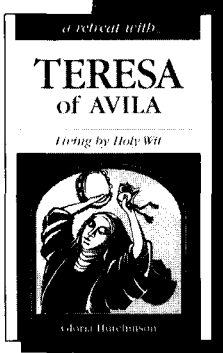

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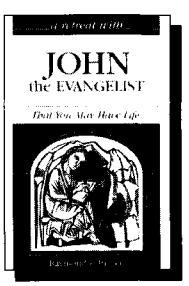

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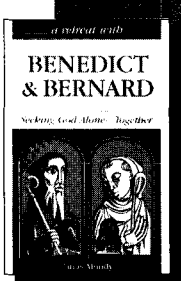

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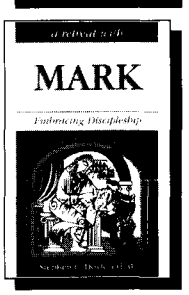

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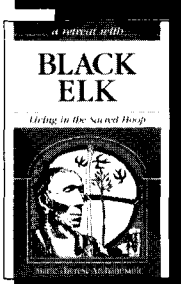

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